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Vol. II.

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JACK HARKAWAY AND THE ITALIANS.



He took out the flute from his pocket, and put the three pieces together. Then he began to play, and though his knowledge of music was slight, he had the air on his mind, and acquitted himself very well. Young Jack soon learnt the song.

JACK HARKAWAY AND THE ITALIANS;

OR,

The Brigand's Doom.

CHAPTER I.

THE RESCUE.

VESUVIUS was still grandly throwing up masses of flame and ashes, as Toro and his men hastened along after the soldiers.

They came up with them about half way between Vesuvius and Naples.

The men had been halted by their commanding officer near a roadside inn, where they were allowed half an hour for refreshment.

Barboni was sitting on a bench in the cart, where he had been placed when captured.

Two police officers and two soldiers guarded him, the other men having piled arms by the side of the road and scattered themselves about, some smoking their favorite cigarettes, others drinking the thin, cheap wine.

Toro saw that his opportunity had arrived, as his keen eye took in the details of the situation we have described.

Creeping up in the darkness, only illuminated by the moon which was veiled at intervals by passing clouds, and the flame of distant Vesuvius, the brigands neared the cart.

Four rifles covered the four guards, and, at a signal from Toro, the men fired with fatal effect.

The guards fell to the ground, and Toro dashed forward with great bravery, reaching the cart just as the alarm was given.

He jumped in, seized the whip, and saying to Barboni "Courage, *amico*—all is well so far," lashed the horse into a gallop and dashed off into the country.

The officer in command fired his revolver without effect, and the soldiers rushed to their arms.

It was too late.

This bold rescue had been so well planned, and so ably executed that the cart was out of sight before the men were ready to fire.

This they did in a volley as soon as they could, and were so fortunate as to hit two out of the six retreating brigands.

These unfortunates bit the dust, but the others got off, and, joining Toro by running at the top of their speed, formed a small rear guard in the case of pursuit.

The soldiers followed up the road at the double.

Toro, being well acquainted with the country, quitted the high road after going about a mile, turned down a narrow lane, and made for Possilippo.

The soldiers were completely baffled, and furious with rage and vexation, returned to barracks, bearing their dead with them.

The rescue of Barboni created the utmost excitement in Naples, and the officer in charge was tried by court-martial, and dismissed the service for his negligence.

The authorities had paid the traitor his price for the betrayal of his master, and after once more having the redoubtable Barboni in their power, they had let him slip through their fingers.

Toro knew that a strict search would be made all along the countryside, and with a tact very creditable to him, determined to seek an entirely new shelter.

His knowledge of the coast enabled him to remember that in a wild, wave-washed, rocky part, some distance from Naples, was a cave, only accessible at low water.

At low water you could scramble over huge boulders of rock and reach the entrance without wading through the sea.

But at high tide there was a considerable depth of water, up to the very edge of the hole which gave admittance to this hollow refuge for evil doers.

In this place Toro took refuge, nor did he rest until Barboni was placed in safety.

Barboni was deeply grateful to Toro for his brave rescue.

"Wait," he said, "until my sight comes back to me, and you will see that I know how to reward my friends."

"Whether you ever become yourself again or not," replied Toro, "you can be safe and cared for with me."

"I am rejoiced to think," continued Barboni, "that the cursed Inglesi will not have the proud satisfaction of seeing me perish on the scaffold. It was that which made me tremble."

"Captain—captain!" exclaimed the man on guard at the mouth of the cave.

"Cospetto!" said Toro. "What is it, my lad? Are the hawks bearing down upon us?"

"Not so bad as that."

"Corpo di Baccho! What do you disturb me for about a trifle when I am talking to a greater brigand than ever you will be?"

"I was scanning the bay with a telescope when I saw a small boat rowed with two men. In the stern sits a third, who steers her."

"Well, by my beard," laughed Toro, "there is a lot in that to wonder at."

"But that isn't all."

"Ah, that makes it a horse of another color—circumstances alter cases."

"Behind the little boat comes a big one rowed by six men, and it seems to be in pursuit of the little one."

"Diavolo," exclaimed Toro, fiercely, "that is not fair. What! six against two! No, no; this must be seen to."

"The pursued is trying to make the shore before the big boat can overhaul it, which is doubtful if it will be able to do," continued the brigand.

"I'll come out; how's the tide?"

"Coming in fast, signor, but you can reach the sands without trouble yet."

"Give me the glass!" exclaimed Toro.

He took it, and advancing to the cave's entrance, scanned the horizon, and carefully examined the boats.

"Por Baccho!" he cried, "this is singular. The man who steers the little boat has but one arm. Can it be Lieut. Hunstoni?"

At the mention of Hunston's name, Barboni pricked up his ears.

"Did you say that Hunstoni was in danger?" he asked.

"It appears to me."

"Let him take his fate, then," replied Barboni, savagely. "He has robbed and insulted me, abandoning me to chance. May his carcass rot on a dunghill."

"Nay," said Toro. "I don't like to see a bandit in difficulty; if he left you, he doubtless had his own little game to play. I'll go and see further into this matter."

Barboni sat down again.

He muttered to himself and cursed Hunston, employing the bitterest invectives against him and Bigamini.

Meanwhile, Toro slung his rifle over his back and descended to the sands, where he placed himself behind a rock and carefully scrutinized the two boats.

Both boats were nearing the shore, and not more than a hundred and fifty yards divided the two.

Those in the little boat were skilled watermen, and bent over their oars like galley-slaves, casting the spray high into the morning air.

At length Toro thought the time had come, and raised his rifle.

He fired, and one of the rowers in the big boat fell back mortally wounded.

Rising in the stern, the coxswain of the police galley urged his men to persist in their work, which they did with evident reluctance.

Again Toro fired, and a second man fell, considerably slackening the speed of the craft.

Not liking the hidden fire, the men openly mutinied and refused to go any nearer the ambushade.

In vain their leader exhorted them to continue to do their duty; they turned the boat round and stood out to sea again.

A loud hurrah hurled defiance at them; the boat shot through the water; its nose grated against the sand, and a man stepped on shore. It was Hunston, who looked round for his deliverer, and saw Toro emerge from his place of concealment behind the rock.

"Is it you, my fine fellow?" exclaimed Hunston. "Cospetto! I owe my life to your friendly shots."

"You are welcome," replied Toro. "How did you happen to get into such a mess?"

"That is easily told. I had arranged to escape in a bark which is riding at anchor

round the point, and those brave fellows agreed to row me to her at daybreak."

"I see," said Toro; "the police were down on you before you could get out of the harbor."

"You're right, and a precious hard row we had for it. I must have been taken had it not been for you; and now, my gay and gentle Toro, tell me the news. While I was skulking in a Tratorial last night, I heard that Signor Borboni had escaped."

"Thanks to a little stratagem of mine he is safe."

"Where?"

"Per Dios," he replied. "I don't know how to treat you. The chief says you deserted him after using him badly, and what with the treachery of that infernal rascal Bigamini—may he burn eternally! and what with the danger about, I don't know who can be trusted."

Hunston laughed.

"You can put confidence in me, *mio caro*; if I am no longer a brigand, I am not a traitor. No, I never sold a pal in my life, and have lived too long to begin now," he answered.

"The chief is full against you, and if I take you to my cave there will be a tragedy if he knows you are there and can pistol you."

"The old bat is too blind to be dangerous," replied Hunston. "Let me remain with you till night. I will make another try for the brig before the moon is up."

"Well, I'll trust you," answered Toro. "As for me, I've no malice against you."

Hunston spoke to the boatmen, telling them to hide the boat in some cove, go to an inn, and rest themselves till evening, and then await at the same spot after the night fell.

CHAPTER II.

THE WOLF AND THE CHILD.

BIGAMINI was afraid, after the murder of his wife, to return to Naples, and his idea was to tramp along the coast, until he came to some port where he was not known, hoping to get away in a ship to Genoa or Marseilles.

He took a little money out of his belt, and put it in his pocket to pay the expenses of the journey.

One of his accomplishments was playing on the flute, which he could do tolerably well, and seeing a beggar with one of those instruments, a little way out of Naples, he knocked him down and stole it.

Armed with the flute, he tore his clothes to make himself look as poor as possible, and slouching his broad-brimmed hat over his eyes, he thought he would pass as a strolling musician.

The fatigues and anxieties he had gone through of late, made him long for a good night's rest, and reaching the cave which the cybil had inhabited, he resolved to indulge in as sound a slumber as his conscience would allow him.

Scarcely had he set foot inside the cave, when a snapping and snarling noise warned him that it would be dangerous to intrude further, without making an examination into the cause of the strange sounds.

A steady look enabled him to see a wolf, who bared his gums and showed his teeth in a threatening manner.

"Hullo, my boy, I think I have seen you before," said Bigamini.

It was the witch's wolf, who had come back to the old place, but why he should prevent any one from entering it was difficult to understand.

A childish voice suddenly exclaimed from the depth of the cave:

"Be quiet, you wolf, or I shall have to beat you. How cross you are to-night."

Bigamini's eyes twinkled.

"Here's a go," he said. "Blest, if I ain't the luckiest cove out. It's Mr. Harkaway's kid. Here's a find."

Raising his voice aloud, he added:

"Master Jack."

"Who's that?" asked the child.

"I'm Mr. Monday's friend," called Bigamini. "You remember me; I have nursed you in the pantry."

"Oh, yes; I remember, Bigamini. Have you come to fetch me home?"

"Of course, I have."

"Come inside. It's very dark, but you'll soon get used to it, I have, and the wolf won't let me go out when he's here."

"Call off the wolf."

The child did so.

"Wolfey, wolfey," he said, "come here, sir!"

But the wolf wouldn't move, and kept on snarling, as if he thought the intruder had come to take the child away from him.

Young Jack, seeing this, walked to the entrance, and patted the wolf on the head, which quieted him a little, though he still kept his eye on Bigamini.

"He don't seem to hurt you," said the latter.

"Not he; I like him. He is a very good wolf, and when he took me away from the brigands, though I was frightened, he carried me here so carefully, and swam across the river with me in his mouth."

"Did he, though? It's a wonder he didn't make a meal of you."

"Has my papa killed the brigands?" asked young Jack.

"It's all up with them; they're done for."

"And I may go home now, I suppose?" replied young Jack.

"We'll start to-morrow morning, but we shall have a long walk. Your pa and ma have gone to another place."

"Oh, that's a bother," said young Jack. "But I don't mind a bit, so long as we get away from here."

Seeing the boy and Bigamini friendly, the wolf ceased his threatening demonstrations and began to think that it was all right.

Bigamini had some supper, which young Jack generously shared with him, and the two went to sleep, the wolf lying at their feet.

They were up with the sun in the morning, and prepared to start on their journey.

Child-like, young Jack placed implicit faith in his new friend, and thoroughly believed that he was going to take him home, when in reality, the rascal was going to do just the reverse.

He meant to take him to France.

His plan was to make Harkaway pay a heavy ransom for the restoration of his son.

They walked along the dusty road, young Jack holding Bigamini's hand, and the wolf trotting along by his side, determined not to lose sight of the boy.

It was a curious illustration of the fondness which savage animals sometimes take to human beings.

The wolf was comparatively tame, we must remember, and had lived with the witch many years as her pet.

Perhaps he felt the want of man's companionship.

He was more like a dog than a wolf, but in reality these two belong to the same species, and instances of tame wolves are by no means rare.

"Can you sing, Master Jack?" asked Bigamini.

"Yes," said the child, proudly.

"What?"

"Let dogs delight; and 'I have been there, and still would go.'"

"Those are hymns; they won't do. Could you learn a little Italian song, from an opera?" said Bigamini.

"What for?" asked young Jack.

"I've got a flute, and I'm rather short of money, so I thought that if I played and you sang, we could get some help along the road, because, as I told you, your pa and ma have moved, and we've a long way to go."

"Why didn't they give you money when you came after me?"

"They didn't know I was going, and I found you quite by accident."

"Oh! I see," said the boy. "Well, if we've got to get money, I'll learn a song."

"Try this—'Ah! che la morte.' It's from an opera, and very pretty. I'll play it for you."

He took out the flute from his pocket, and put the three pieces together.

Then he began to play, and though his knowledge of music was slight, he had the air on his mind, and acquitted himself very well.

Young Jack soon learnt the song.

It sounded very pretty in his childish treble, and Bigamini declared that they should be a great success, if they went on as well as they had begun.

CHAPTER III.

MR. MOLE HAS QUEER FANCIES.

WHEN Jack Harkaway came back to Naples, he was in high spirits.

Harvey, the little coxswain, and Clear-the-Track Sam were all in evening dress in the drawing-room.

They had recovered from the slight wounds they had received in the last encounter with the brigands, and were anxiously waiting to hear the news that Jack would bring with him from the environs of Torre Del Greco, whither he had gone to capture the chief.

Emily had dressed herself and come down to dinner for the first time since her child was stolen.

She was very pale and weak, but her face beamed with the smile of hope.

"Jack's late," said Harvey, looking at his watch. "It's a quarter past eight, and we dine at eight usually."

"Give him another quarter of an hour," said Walter, "if Mrs. Harvey has no objection."

"Not the slightest, Mr. Campbell," replied Hilda.

"I guess I'm too anxious for the news to be hungry," said Sam. "Who'd have thought the little spy would have split upon his master."

"It's always the way with low-minded ruffians," replied Harvey. "Take any police case in which some swell burglar is arrested; the police always say they took him from information they received. Some one rounds on his pal."

"My dear Richard," said Hilda, "what strong language to use before ladies."

"I beg pardon, my dear," replied Harvey. "I forgot you were here."

At this moment, Ada, Monday's wife, came up and asked if they would have dinner, as the cook said it was quite ready.

"Yes, if you please, Ada," replied Hilda; "I don't think Mr. Harkaway would wish us to wait any longer for him."

Ada went away to order dinner, and just as she came up to announce that it was on the table, Jack sprang up the stairs and bounded into the room.

"Hurrah! here is Harkaway," said the little coxswain.

"Gentleman," said Jack, pardonably excited at the news he had to communicate, "I have the pleasure to announce that our labors are ended, for Barboni is a prisoner and at this moment in the hands of the police on his way to a Neapolitan prison."

A cheer, such as only British throats can raise, rang through the room and was echoed again and again.

Even the ladies caught the infection, and clapped their hands at the glorious news.

Congratulations poured in upon Jack on all sides.

Nothing was talked about all dinner time but the capture of the brigand.

They little thought that a few hours later they were to hear of Toro's clever and gallant rescue.

The champagne flowed, and all was jollity and hilarity until the dessert was put on the table.

After a time the ladies retired, leaving the gentlemen to talk over their wine.

"I think," said Jack, "Monday will find the child and then we shall be able to return to England, victorious in everything."

"I'm sorry we didn't capture Barboni in the last fight," said Campbell.

"It would have been more satisfactory," replied Harvey.

"Won't the Neapolitans be wild, rather?" observed Sam. "I've got a lot of bets on with fellows at the Europa, and they don't want us to nail their brigand."

"Go and have your coffee, then, and collect your debts," said Jack. "Barboni will be in jail before long."

There was a noise in the passage, a crash, and presently in walked Mr. Mole, looking very gaunt, thin, and ghastly.

"By Jove! Mole's got loose," said Harvey.

"The deuce he has," remarked Jack. "We shall have a bother in getting him back again."

Looking sternly at the assembled company, Mr.

Mole seized a bottle and poured out some wine, which he drank.

Then his rigid countenance relaxed, and he said, with an imbecile smile:

"Here's to you, boys."

"Sit down, sir. Are you better?" asked Jack.

Mr. Mole's face clouded again, and he said, striking an attitude:

"Base menial! what means this revelry?"

"We're drinking your health, Mr. Mole."

"Mole, who's he? I know not the man," replied that individual. "Don't you know me?"

"No, we don't," said Jack, with a wink to his friends.

"None of you?"

"No," said Harry. "If you are not Mr. Mole I don't know you."

"Who is this Mole?" asked the professor.

"A friend of ours."

"No matter, let Mole go. I'll tell you in confidence who I am."

"Who?"

"I'm Mount Vesuvius in a state of eruption; at least, I am going to be in eruption presently, and if you don't pump on me, I shall burn the house down; that's why I've been drinking so much lately. I knew I was going to erupt, and I thought I'd put the fire out."

"We'll pump on you, sir," said Clear-the-Track; "I calculate I'm a good fireman."

"For Heaven's sake," replied Mole, "don't joke about this matter; it's getting very serious."

"Let's take the gentleman into the garden, and put him under the pump," suggested Sam. "I'll soon make apple squash of him."

Mole threw himself into an arm-chair, and took hold of a bottle, at which he sucked quietly.

"Come on," said the little coxswain; "we'll pump on you."

Mr. Mole's mood changed.

"Not to-day, baker, thank you," he replied, with a bland smile; "you can call to-morrow with a crusty cottage. I'm very comfortable, and a person of my consideration ought not to be molested by menials. Horace says, *dulce est desipere in loco*, which you may freely translate—it is sweet for a man to sip this wine. Let me sip."

Jack touched him on the shoulder.

"Come, sir," he said, "you must go with me."

"Must! That's a harsh word to employ to a king. Am I a captive monarch?"

"No foolishness."

"I am not aware that I have deserved this language. Who are you?" asked Mole.

"You know me well enough," said Jack.

Mole tapped his forehead.

"Are you the—the Shah?" he asked.

"No."

"Ah! then you are a Carthaginian. No matter, let me sip." He took another pull at the bottle.

"Put that down, sir," said Jack, authoritatively.

"Avaunt, Carthaginian!" said Mole, angrily, waving his hand.

"You must come with me."

"Let me sip," pleaded Mole.

"You've sipped long enough, and it's for your good that I want to keep you quiet for a few days. Come with me."

"Won't you let me sip?" asked Mole, pleadingly.

"Not now. Come to your room. I'll sit up with you."

"What! a jailer! A Carthaginian jailer," said Mr. Mole. "This is too much. Must Philip of Macedon, and the cousin of the King of Otaheite, put up with this?"

Jack turned to his friends.

"Run up to the Cafe Di Europa and see what the Naples swells think of the news, will you? and I'll look after Mr. Mole. He'll be all right if I keep him away from the lush for a few days," he said.

"All right," replied Harvey, "though I'll stop with Mole, if you'd like to go instead of me."

"No, thanks. Emily is very poorly, and she'd like to have me in the house with her."

The others departed, and with some difficulty, Jack got Mr. Mole up stairs to his bedroom, and sent for a doctor, who administered a sleeping draught to his patient.

This was very strong, and soon took effect upon Mr. Mole's weakened brain.

When Jack saw him in a sound slumber, he locked the door, taking care to remove a razor and a pair of scissors, lest he might injure himself in the night.

He visited his wife and found her much better; she begged him to go to the drawing-room and keep Lily and Hilda company, as she was going to bed, and she assured him that she would not mope any more and had determined to get well and strong again.

"There is an overruling Providence. I am here and I have been punished for not getting my feet in it," she said.

"I only have you in the world to care for, my love," he said; "and you ought to get well, for my sake."

"I will, dearest."

"You don't know how it grieves me to see you like this," he added.

"Get me back my child and quit Naples; that's all the medicine I want," she replied.

"I hope to be able to do so soon," he said, kissing her affectionately.

He went down stairs and found Hilda playing and singing.

She selected Longfellow's "Excelsior," and when she had finished, she said:

"I always think of you when I sing that song, Mr. Harkaway."

"May I ask why?" asked Jack.

"Because, when you have killed a dozen brigands, you want to kill a dozen more. The meaning of the word, I think, is higher."

"Yes," said Jack.

"Well, you are always wanting to achieve something more than you have hitherto done."

"Thank you," said Jack. "I take it as a great compliment."

At this moment the little coxswain rushed into the room.

"What's ruffled your feathers, young one?" he asked.

"There's an awful row at the Cafe Di Europa; come up at once," was the reply.

"Yes."

"There are half a dozen Italians to one Englishman. I have left the fun to tell you."

"But Sam and Harvey?"

"Are fighting like bricks."

"By Jove! I'm on," said Jack.

The little coxswain was pale and excited.

Jack did not stop to say anything to the ladies.

He rushed away, put on his hat in the passage, and ran along the street with Walter.

"What's the row about?" he asked, as they pelted up the Strada Di Toledo.

"We were chaffing the fellows about catching the brigand, when the chief of the police came in and said he'd escaped," answered Walter.

"Impossible."

"It's true."

Jack's cheek blanched and he bit his lip angrily.

"How did it happen?" he asked.

"They say this new brigand Toro surprised the soldiers while they were bivouacking."

"I wouldn't have had it happen on any account," said Jack. "What duffers these Italians are."

"That's what we said, and then they insulted us and called us thief-catchers, so we pitched in," said the little coxswain.

"I see."

"We were beginning to get the worst of it, and I set off to fetch you, thinking you wouldn't like to be out of it."

"Thank you. Come on," answered Jack, hurriedly.

Side by side they ran along until they reached the Cafe Di Europa, from the interior of which sounds of conflict proceeded.

Jack was eager and panting for the fray.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ROW AT THE CAFE DI EUROPA.

WHEN Jack and Walter entered the cafe they found everything in confusion.

Some of the less excitable or more respectable

frequenters of the place looked on at the riot or tried to stop it.

But about half a dozen were fighting with Sam and Harvey, who had fixed their backs against the wall and were fighting as only Englishmen can fight.

As Jack put in an appearance, Sam made a rush, crying, "clear the track," and a couple of Neapolitans rolled over.

Fierce oaths and savage Italian cries rang through the room.

"Down with the English! Turn them out," was heard on all sides.

Jack took a calm view of the scene.

He saw that his two friends were outnumbered, and that they were being badly knocked about.

No amount of talking would have saved them, for the Italians were excited, and each recruit from the onlookers joined the heavy odds already arrayed against them.

"Do you feel fit?" said Jack to Walter.

"Never felt more like fighting in my life."

"Cut in, then."

Jack turned up his coat sleeves, put his hat a little back on his head, and shouting:

"Oxford forever!" attacked the nearest man.

It was like playing at ninepins directly Jack began.

His strong arm was like a poleaxe, and the Neapolitans resembled cattle in the shambles.

Harvey, hearing Jack's voice, plucked up, and it was time that assistance came, for brave as he was, he could not have held out much longer, as he was pretty well pummelled by the three or four men who were constantly striking at him.

In less than five minutes, the four friends had cleared that part of the room, and the Italians had had enough of it.

They stood glaring at their opponents and chattering like monkeys, afraid to begin again, though there were at least a couple of dozen of them.

One Italian drew a knife and brandished it in the air, exclaiming:

"I am not afraid of these brigand-hunting Inglesi. They fight like boatmen. We are gentlemen and cannot use our hands as they do. Will either of them have the courage to fight with a knife?"

There was a momentary silence.

"We do not use knives in England," replied Jack.

"Ha! ha!" laughed the Italians, "they are cowards. Count Victor is right. They are afraid. Ha! ha! ha!"

Derisive laughter rang through the room and found an echo in every gilded corner.

"We will fight you with our fists, and beat you as we have done already, though you are six to one against us," said Jack.

"No, no; we can't fight with blackguards," answered Count Victor, whose dark flashing eye gleamed vengefully.

"The knife! the knife!" cried the Italians.

The aspect of affairs was becoming serious, and Jack saw that they would go with tarnished honor if the challenge was not accepted.

Clear-the-Track was cool and collected, seeming to enjoy the excitement which prevailed on all sides of him.

"I guess," he said, "that I know how to use that weapon, so if you'll let me tackle this fellow, Harkaway, I'll top him as a warning to the rest."

"It's my quarrel," replied Jack.

"No; it is not. You weren't here when it began. I reckon I commenced it."

But Jack was obstinate.

He would not give way.

"No," he answered. "They've fixed upon me, thank you all the same for your offer, and I do not feel inclined to show the white feather."

"Take my bowie, then," said Sam.

He handed Jack a handsome bowie knife, which opened with a snap, the advantage being that when the spring in the back had caught the blade, it held it fast.

The knife could not shut up again and cut his knuckles.

"Do you accept my challenge?" asked the count.

"I do," replied Jack.

Count Victor bowed politely in answer to Jack's acceptance of the challenge, and a scarcely perceptible smile crept round the corner of his well-cut mouth.

He considered that he had his antagonist at a disadvantage.

The count was a tall, thin, agile, well-made man, who was held in high esteem by his countrymen.

Taking off his coat and waistcoat, he tied a silk handkerchief round his waist, and turning up his right hand shirt sleeve, displayed a white, muscular arm.

Jack disdained to throw off anything, and prepared to fight as he was.

A space was cleared in the center of the room, the door was locked inside to prevent impertinent interference on the part of the public or the police.

The spectators formed a ring, and betting on the event became brisk, the odds being heavily and freely laid against the Englishman.

When everything was ready, the two men faced one another.

"Are you ready, signor?" asked the count, with perfect ease and politeness.

"Quite," replied Jack.

The duello then commenced.

Jack kept his eye fixed upon that of the Italian, which was bright, liquid, gleaming.

They faced one another for some time and gradually moved, the count going round Jack, and the latter turning slowly so as to keep him well in view.

At length the count came to close quarters.

He made a thrust at Jack, which the latter parried, but not without receiving a cut which ripped up his coat sleeve.

It was a fearful sight to behold those men, with their flashing knives throwing back the light of the many gas lamps, seeking who should spill the other's blood.

Neither the Italians nor the English spoke a word.

"Ha!" cried the count, forcing Jack's guard and thrusting at his heart.

Jack stepped hurriedly, and felt the point of the knife graze his skin; quickly he threw himself on the Italian, who, not having time to recover himself, presented his left arm to shield his body.

The knife's point ran up his arm from the wrist to the elbow, ripping up the shirt, and leaving a long red mark from which the blood fell on the floor in a hot, steaming stream.

The pent-up excitement burst out in a deep groan at this untoward hit.

Count Victor's face became convulsed with anger.

His equanimity vanished, and he was at once transformed into a savage, so furious was he at this lucky thrust, which, without crippling him, threatened to weaken him by loss of blood.

Jack now kept himself on the defensive.

His tactics were to exhaust his adversary, who, with demoniac howls, made frantic thrusts at him, springing wildly about, and sa-ha-ing like a professional swordsman.

In spite of his vigilance Jack received several small wounds, which drew blood, and made him smart with pain.

Jack saw that he was getting weaker, and he determined to use his great strength.

Accordingly he boldly rushed upon him.

He seized his wrist and held it as in a vise in his left hand, but the count managed to wriggle the edge of his knife near his opponent's body, and the blade, cutting through his clothes, grazed his ribs, inflicting a fleshwound.

But he was powerless after this, for Jack still held him tightly, and paused for an opportunity to strike him in a place which would not be fatal.

Accordingly he plunged his knife into the count's right shoulder, and the wretched man fell fainting to the ensanguined floor.

The useless knife dropped from his nervous hand.

With both arms disabled, he was obliged to give up the contest and own himself beaten.

Bestowing a proud look upon the Italians, Jack retired among his friends, and sat down.

As he walked, he left a trail of blood behind.

him, for his clothes were saturated, and he was bleeding freely.

"Bravo, Jack!" exclaimed Harvey. "You did that in prime style. By jove! it's the most plucky thing I ever saw you do."

"Are you much hurt?" asked the little coxswain.

"I am battered a bit," replied Jack.

Sam approached with a cup of wine, which he handed to him.

"Heroes ain't above drinking, I guess," he said.

Jack drank the wine eagerly.

"Call a coach, Dick," he said to Harvey. "I must get home and stop this bleeding, or I shall be as weak as a rat to-morrow."

Harvey spoke to one of the waiters, who went in search of a fiacre.

Count Victor, meanwhile, had been raised by his disconsolate and chopfallen friends.

He was suffering the most acute agony from the two jobbing blows he had received in the shoulder, each of which had penetrated to the bone, and cut through important veins and muscles.

His oaths and curses were painful to listen to.

He called the saints to witness that he would have a fearful revenge for the defeat he had sustained.

One of the frequenters at the cafe was a doctor, and he attended to the count's wounds.

He had not the courtesy, however, to extend the offer of his surgical skill to Harkaway.

Presently the fiacre rolled up to the door.

"Good-evening, gentlemen," said Jack. "I beg to thank you sincerely for the little amusement you have been so good as to offer me this evening. I shall not forget you, believe me."

The four men got into the coach, and were driven in a few minutes to the Strada Di Toledo.

When Jack was landed, Harvey set off again in search of a doctor.

Jack requested to be put in a room on the ground floor, so that the ladies might not be alarmed.

Especially he was anxious that Emily should not hear that he had been fighting a duel and was wounded, though in reality his hurts were not of a serious nature.

But a wife's ears are very sharp, and hearing the men come in, Emily became alarmed when Jack did not appear.

She had gone to bed, but quickly wrapping herself in a dressing-gown, she ran down stairs before anyone could stop her.

Jack had stripped to the waist, and Walter was busily engaged in sponging the cuts, having a basin of warm water on a chair, and counting the wounds.

"He's grazed you pretty well about the ribs, and touched you with the point, too, all over," said the little coxswain.

"How many digs has he given me?" asked Jack.

"I've counted fifteen. Got any below the waist?"

"One in the right thigh, I think. It feels stiff."

"That makes sixteen. What a fight it was, eh!" said Walter.

At this moment Emily entered the room.

She shuddered at the ghastly spectacle Harkaway presented, his naked body being cut about in a fantastic manner, and the blood issuing from the slashing wounds.

"Oh, Jack!" she exclaimed, tearfully.

"My dear Emmy," replied Jack, "this is wrong. You should not have done this."

"How could I help it? You know how I love you, dearest, and I feared something had happened. Are you dangerously hurt?"

"Chuck a towel or two over me, Walter," said Jack.

The little coxswain did so.

"There is no harm done, dear, beyond what a little diachylon sticking plaster will soon put right," he went on. "The doctor is expected every moment, so you mustn't fret."

"How did it happen?"

"The boys got into a row at the Cafe di Europa. Harvey and Sam were getting the worst of it, and

they sent for me. I am obliged to look after my boys, you know, Emmy."

"Well?"

"I had to polish off the 'furrineers,' and a Count Victor challenged me to fight with knives. He's sorry for it now."

"Is he dead?" asked Emily, trembling again.

"No. I might have killed him if I'd liked, mightn't I, young one?"

"Yes, twice over," answered the coxswain.

"Oh, Jack, dear, dear Jack, when will these troubles be over?" said Emily. "I am not so strong as I was once, and you are so brave that I never know what may happen. I am always nervous about you, and this place is killing me."

"We shall soon go away, my pet," replied Jack.

"Really?"

"Most certainly. All we have to do is to find the child, and see Barboni die on the scaffold, then ho! for England once more. By the way, have you seen Monday?"

"No, he hasn't returned yet, and his wife, Ada, is very anxious about him. Oh! Jack, this life amidst constant excitement may be very agreeable to you men, but it is death to poor, weak, little women."

Jack was going to reply, but a sudden faintness came over him.

He propped his head back, and gasped for breath.

"Ta—take her away," he murmured.

The next moment he fell back on the bed, and became insensible.

Brave and strong as he was, his constitution was not made of cast-iron, and he felt the inevitable effect of the loss of blood, pain and excitement.

Just then the doctor entered with Harvey, who conducted Emily to her own room, giving her in charge of Hilda and Lily.

Jack's wounds were attended to, he was put to bed, and the doctor had an interview with the anxious wife, assuring her that there was no danger, and quieting her fears.

CHAPTER V.

HUNSTON AMUSES AN IDLE HOUR.

WHEN Hunston was conducted to the cave by the sea-shore, Toro advised him not to say anything which might irritate Barboni.

"The old lion has had his claws cut," he remarked, "but there is a kick in him yet; he bares his gums, shows his teeth, and would bite if he could see where to plant his teeth."

"I'm not afraid of him," replied Hunston.

They made their way over the rocks and entered the cave, in which the brigands had prepared such a dinner as their desperate position would allow them.

Fish caught in holes of the rocks, and goat's meat plundered from the peasantry, did not make a bad meal, helped out with black bread and swine's flesh, and washed down with a draught of wine.

Barboni sat sullenly by himself, eating what was given him in silence.

At length he recognized Hunston's voice.

"Ha!" he exclaimed, "I hear tones I used to know well. Is Hunstoni among you?"

"I'm here, *caro mio*," said Hunston. "Shake hands and be friends."

"You robbed and deserted me in my hour of need," said Barboni. "Is Toro here?"

"Not far off, old lion," answered the brigand.

"You are my friend? Have Hunstoni shot?"

Toro laughed aloud and replied:

"No, no, we can't do that sort of thing. Hunstoni is my guest; he will go away again to-night, and his life is sacred in my eyes, as he has not been a traitor, and he has broken bread with me."

"Shoot the scoundrel!" roared Barboni. "Give me a pistol; I will rid the earth of a villain myself."

"Shut up, you old fool," said Hunston. "I'll put a bullet in you in a brace of shakes, you imbecile."

Barboni took up the glass he had been drinking out of, and threw it in the direction from which Hunston's voice proceeded.

Being blind, he could not take good aim; and it shattered itself against the adjoining rock.

"Don't destroy the crockery, Barboni," said Toro, mildly. "That's our only glass, and we shall have to drink out of the bottle now. Cospetto! you are not the Prince Di Villanova, in Castle Inferno. Where the deuce do you get your extravagant ideas from?"

Barboni sat down and covered his face with his hands.

"All are against me—all," he muttered, with a sob.

Hunston lighted his pipe, and drank some more wine.

"Been on the road lately," said Hunston.

"We've had no time since we rescued Barboni from the soldiers," answered Toro.

"It's devilish slow here," said Hunston; "suppose we amuse an idle hour?"

"I should like it. Per Baccho!" replied the giant, stretching his brawny limbs, "that is just what I want; laziness kills me."

"How are you off for cash?"

"But poorly. We have had no luck lately."

"What do you say to stopping the mail train, which passes a spot not far from here at mid-day?" said Hunston.

"Corpo di Christo!" swore the Herculean brigand, "that idea never occurred to me."

"Will you do it?"

"If you assist."

"I'll do more. I'll lead. It is my suggestion. You and your men come with me at once, armed with axes and revolvers, and I'll show you how to rob a train," said Hunston.

The brigand was delighted with the idea, and gave orders for his small band to be in readiness at once.

Barboni listened to all that was going on in a sulky sort of manner, and when he had gathered from the conversation that an expedition was being planned, his old spirit was warmed up and he was anxious to make one of the party.

To stop and rob the mail train was a grand enterprise, which was just the sort of thing he liked.

Now he felt the bitterness of being blind.

In the agony of his heart he said to himself:

"Better that I were dead than like this."

"We shan't be long, old lion," said Toro.

"I would give ten years of my life to go with you," replied Barboni.

"It is useless. You cannot see, and you would be in the way," remarked Hunston.

The brigands went away, leaving Barboni swearing like a pagan, half out of his mind, and vowing that he would have a fearful revenge upon Hunston before long.

Hunston had a time-table with him, which he had bought with a view of escaping by train, an idea he was forced to abandon when he found that the station was watched by the police to prevent any of the brigands from getting away.

A large tree grew close to the line, and Hunston calculated that if it was cut down, it would fall over the metals.

Pointing to it he said to the brigands who were armed with axes:

"Cut it down, quick; the mail is due in fifteen minutes."

Two men placed themselves on either side of the tree.

Soon the axes were raised high above their shoulders and flashed through the air, coming in contact with the wood, and causing a dull thudding echo to result.

"Hark!" cried Hunston, putting his hand to his ear.

The steady beat of the engine was heard, and the rattling of the train as it came through a cutting some miles off.

The train, the train!" exclaimed the brigands.

"Cut away for your lives!" cried Hunston.

The noise of the approaching train came rapidly nearer and yet more near.

At length it was visible at the edge of a curve. On came the panting Behemoth, dragging after it a dozen carriages and a guard's brake.

Crash!

The tree fell, and luckily tumbled across the line, where it completely blocked both the six foot and the permanent way.

There was a shrill whistle, prolonged and terrible.

The driver of the engine had seen the impediment in his path and turned on the steam whistle. Suddenly it ceased.

He merely meant it as a signal to the guard to put on the brake, and the next moment the steam was shut off and the engine reversed.

The engine driver and his mate, seeing that a collision with the tree was now inevitable, jumped off the engine.

Presently the train, going at a very reduced speed, struck the tree, and the engine bounded over it, coming to a standstill until the carriages bumped up against it and turned it on its side.

The brigands now rushed to the carriages.

Screams and groans came from every carriage, for though no one was killed, most of the passengers were badly bruised and knocked about.

Some had limbs broken by the terrible shock.

It was an easy task for Toro and his men to collect the valuables that the injured and panic-stricken passengers had about them.

Hunston directed his attention to the van, where he found the guard sitting on a box.

"What have you got there?" he asked.

"What you shan't have," replied the guard resolutely.

Hunston leveled his revolver at him and shot him dead.

"That's soon settled," he muttered.

His next care was to open the box, in which he found eight bags of gold, which he fastened together with a cord and slung round his neck.

The weight was so great that he bent under it.

"Retreat!" he shouted.

Toro and his men instantly left the ruined train and joined Hunston, who quickly led the way to the sea shore.

The passengers were unarmed, and had they not been, they were too much frightened and hurt to follow the robbers, who retired unmolested with their plunder.

When they reached the cave, the gold was divided in equal shares, as well as the jewelry, and Hunston was able to fill a second belt with his ill-gotten gains.

He was now a rich man.

But it was a question whether he would ever get away to enjoy it, as the coast was closely watched, and he had no doubt the police was on the lookout for him.

CHAPTER VI.

THE STROLLING MUSICIANS.

We must now devote our attention to Bigamini and young Jack, whom we left trudging along the road, under a hot and burning sun.

The first village they came to was a small one.

All the young and middle-aged men had gone to work in the fields, and only the women and old men remained with the children.

"Tootle! Tootle!"

Bigamini began to play on his flute, and a crowd of ragged urchins came round them.

The little fellow began to sing Verdi's melody "*Ah! che la morte*," and sang it plaintively and well in his childish treble.

In a whining tone Bigamini said:

"For the love of heaven give us some food; me and my boy are very poor and hungry. God will bless you, kind people, for your charity to the poor singers."

This appeal was productive of a very plentiful crop of bread and fruit, meat being scarce among the peasants, who had not enjoyed a particularly good harvest.

While they were eating their breakfast under a tree, not forgetting to feed the wolf, an incident happened which Bigamini did not bargain for—a black man passed by them.

He was apparently bent upon the same errand as themselves for he was nearly naked and looked like a beggar.

Bigamini no sooner cast his eyes upon the black man, than he hastily crammed his bread and fruit into his pocket and prepared to move

"Come along, Master Jack," he said, in a low tone; we must not waste time; your papa and mamma are expecting you."

But young Jack's eyes were as sharp as his.

"I shan't go!" he cried. "That's Monday, papa's black servant."

"Nonsense!" replied Bigamini. "How could Monday get here? It's a bogey; look how all the people run away from him."

"Monday!" cried the child, "Monday!"

His further utterance was checked by a heavy box on the ears, which Bigamini kindly and paternally bestowed upon him.

"Hold your row," he said, "or I'll murder you."

The black, however, had heard the cry, and turned around.

It was Monday.

He saw young Jack, and with a yell of delight, rushed in his direction.

Monday had been on the tramp for several days and having started without any money, he found it difficult to procure food.

He was half starved.

The peasantry did not like the look of him; much rather would they have seen a brigand.

Being very superstitious, and unaccustomed to the sight of black people, they thought he was an evil spirit and would bring them no luck, so they drove him away very often with curses.

He had determined not to return home until he could bring his master some news of his missing child.

Many miles had he wandered.

At last good fortune brought him in the very nick of time to save the boy from the clutches of Bigamini, who would have taken him far away, so that he would not have gladdened his parents' eyes for many a long month to come.

Monday made a bound towards the tree, and cried:

"Ho! you Bigami thief, what do you do with young Mast' Jack?"

He caught the child in his arms and kissed him tenderly.

"Mast' Jack, Mast' Jack!" he said. "This one great day. Bless um little heart, um found him at last."

Bigamini had torn his clothes to rags, but he had not thrown away his pistol.

While the black was occupied with the child, he drew it, and leveling it in a hurry, fired.

Fortunately, the wolf, thinking he meant some harm to the child, jumped up and bit his arm.

The shot flew harmlessly over his intended victim's head.

"Cuss the luck!" muttered Bigamini.

Dropping the child, Monday flew at the wretched spy, and catching him in a powerful grasp, threw him against the trunk of the tree, where he fell stunned and bleeding.

Monday took the child's hand and retreated, saying:

"Come along, Mast' Jack."

Bigamini was frantic with rage and despair.

He followed at a distance, hoping that some accident would again throw the child into his power, and as he went, he bewailed his hard luck.

"Who'd have thought that cussed infernal black would have come up like a Jack-in-the-box to crab me?" he muttered, almost crying with vexation.

As they walked along, the child told Monday the history of his wanderings, and how he had made up his mind never to part with the wolf.

"You shall keep um wolf, sare," replied Monday.

"Is Bigamy a bad man?" asked young Jack.

"Him awful bad, sare; so bad, him like um debbil."

"Was he not taking me to see my papa?"

"No, him go t'other way, sare; me just come up in time. Bigamy is a brigand; he steal you, Mast' Jack."

His wanderings had made him well acquainted with the country, and he knew that they were not far from Pompeii, from whence there was a railway to Naples.

"Um got any money, Mast' Jack?" asked Monday, who recollected that he could not travel by railway, without paying the fare.

"I've got a gold piece with a hole in it tied

round my neck, which mamma gave me," replied Master Jack.

"Give um here."

"You can have it if you like, though I would rather not part with my mamma's present."

"Get plenty more, sare," said Monday, as he unfastened the coin, and going into the station took two tickets for Naples.

In a short time they arrived in the city, and made their way to the house in the Strada.

Jack was still in bed, his wounds being very stiff; and Emily was sitting by his side, holding a bunch of grapes for her husband to eat the luscious berries.

Suddenly Monday burst into the room, followed by young Jack and the wolf, who would not leave his little master for a moment.

"Here him come, sare," cried Monday, rapturously; "um found Mast' Jack and brought him back safe, sare."

The next moment he was clasped in his mother's arms, and she was shedding tears of joy over her lost one, now so opportunely found.

Jack was equally delighted.

"My darling! my darling!" cried Emily, covering his face with kisses. "I will never let you out of my sight again. Thank God for this."

Jack held out his hand to Monday.

"I can never thank you enough," he said.

"That al' right, Mast' Jack," said Monday. "Um say not come back without him. Just in time, though; that debbil Bigamini got him."

The black proceeded to tell all he knew, and the wolf, as if he thought he ought to be taken some notice of, jumped on the bed.

"Oh! the horrid creature," cried Emily; "kill him, he will injure my child; kill the wild beast."

"No, mamma," said young Jack; "that's my pet. You mustn't kill him."

Young Jack patted the wolf on the head, and the animal licked his hand affectionately.

All Emily's fear vanished when she heard how kind the creature had been to the boy, and she even ventured so far as to pat and stroke him herself.

All was rejoicing and happiness in the house now.

Jack was soon able to get up.

"All we have to do now," he said to his friends, "is to bring Barboni to the scaffold, and then we can quit Naples with the full consciousness of having kept our vow, and swept away the curse of brigandage from this fair country."

Emily sighed when she heard this.

A determination to hunt to the foot of the scaffold the desperate man already driven to bay, meant exposure to fresh perils, and she knew not what misery in the future.

"Is it not enough that you have crippled his power, destroyed his band, and he is blind and helpless?" she said.

"No."

"What more do you want?"

"The villain's life."

"He deserves to die for his crimes, and no doubt vengeance will overtake him in time. Cannot you leave Barboni's punishment to Heaven?" she asked.

"I believe, my dear," said Jack, "that I am the chosen instrument in the hands of Heaven, and I will not give up until he dies upon the scaffold."

"Cannot you find out where he is hiding?"

"Up to the present time, all our efforts have been baffled, but we hope to be successful soon."

"He seems to be quiet enough," remarked Emily.

"Yes, but the fire is only smouldering. Such men as Hunston and Toro cannot keep quiet long. They will do something violent soon, and then we shall get scent of the old fox's hiding-place," said Jack.

As if to give confirmation to his words, the little coxswain entered.

"Great news!" he said.

"What?"

"A band of brigands, led by two men, who answer the description of Toro and Hunston, have stopped the mail train, and robbed the passengers, murdered the guard, and carried off a lot of gold in bags."

"By Jove!" said Jack, "just what I expected."

"They threw a tree across the line, and many of the passengers are seriously injured," cried Walter. "Where did this happen?" asked Jack.

"Not far from Portici."

"Ah, that is a direction in which we have not searched; we have stuck too much to the old lines. Kiss me, Emily. We shall soon have them all, now; this is what I have been waiting for."

Young Jack put his hand on his father's knee.

"You going to fight Barboni, papa?" he said.

"Yes, my lad," replied Jack, patting his curly head.

"You take me and my wolf, will you?"

"Not this time," said Jack, with a smile.

Young Jack looked deeply disappointed, and Emily caught him in her arms, straining him to her breast, as if she feared the brigands might again tear him from her.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ESCAPE OF HUNSTON.

A JAR of brandy had been brought out of a corner by Toro, and the brigands drank deeply after their success in robbing the train.

Hunston's health was proposed and heartily received.

The only one who did not share in the general hilarity was Barboni.

He sat sulkily aloof at the extremity of the cave, and seemed to be as deaf to all that was going on around him as he was blind.

It galled him to think that he could not participate in the expedition of Toro.

Utterly disregarding him, the others continued their carouse.

Hunston became elated with drink.

Seizing Toro's hand, he exclaimed:

"I like you, Bill."

"And I like you, *caro mio*," replied the herculean brigand.

"Are you particularly fond of this place?"

"Not over much."

"You are not wedded to it; you haven't planted yourself to grow up into a full-blown gallows bird when the Bersaglieri catch you," continued Hunston.

"I suppose that is what I must expect to be some day or other, but it is not kind of you, signor, to remind me of my probable destiny," said Toro.

He shrugged his shoulders as a scarcely perceptible shudder crept over him.

"Would you like to leave Naples?" said Hunston.

"If you get away safely to-night, what are your plans?" asked Toro, evading the question.

"I've altered them," said Hunston, lowering his voice so that Barboni could not hear what he said.

"Well?"

Toro evinced considerable curiosity to hear what his companion had to say.

"I have arranged a passage in a brig lying off the point," said Hunston. "She is laden with wine and oil; her crew are only eleven hands all told."

"Well?" ejaculated Toro, again.

"I meant to have taken my hook in her to England, but if you and your men will come with me we'll play a bigger game."

"Ha!" said Toro, who began to see.

"We will cut the throats of the crew, and chuck their bodies overboard."

"Good."

"Having possession of the vessel, we can go where we like, and if we cook up fictitious papers, no one will suspect us if we get a few thousand miles away."

"But," said Toro, "I am no sailor."

"What of that?"

"Nor my men either. On land they are as brave as lions, but on board ship"—

"Humbug. I tell you," interrupted Hunston, with a gesture of contempt. "I am an old salt, and I'll work the ship if you and your fellows do what I tell them."

"You may rely upon that," replied Toro.

"Do you like the plan?"

"In a word," said Toro, "you propose that we should turn pirates."

"Not exactly. We will trade when it suits us

and we will rob when it is more convenient," continued Hunston.

Toro then engaged in earnest conversation with his men for a short time, and his arguments did not fail to convince them of the advantage held out in Hunston's scheme.

They jumped at the chance of having a ship of their own and sailing on the bright blue sea.

"It's all right," replied Toro, returning. "I knew the fellows would follow me anywhere."

"Are they all agreed?" asked Hunston.

"All."

"Here's jolly good luck to our new venture," said Hunston, emptying his glass.

"I have always been kind to my men," exclaimed Toro; "they love me as a father."

"Barboni made a mistake in always being a tyrant and a bully. He thought no more of shooting a man than he did of eating his dinner," said Hunston.

"He had a larger band than mine," observed Toro, "and brigands are hard to manage."

"No matter, kindness goes a long way."

"What about Barboni?" asked Toro.

"Oh, let him rip. What's the good of the old owl?"

"Won't you take him?"

"You'll ask me to tie a corpse to my neck next," answered Hunston, with a brutal laugh.

"I don't quite like the idea of Barboni being left here to starve," remarked Toro.

"What does it matter to us?" replied Hunston.

"Well, well, it'll be hard."

"That's your sort, my sucking Hercules. I can see I shall make something of you by-and-by," said Hunston.

The brigands received their orders in a low tone, which were to go down to the beach and wait for the appearance of the boatmen, who had been heavily bribed to once more undertake the perilous task of conveying Hunston to the brig which was lying outside the Possillippo point.

Hunston accompanied them.

Toro was the last to leave the cave, and he had lingered for a purpose of his own.

There was much to admire about the character of the "old lion," as he call Barboni.

For years the name of Barboni had been a name of terror throughout the whole Italian peninsula.

When Toro was comparatively a young man, his blood had been fired by hearing stories of the daring and bravery of Barboni.

Had he never heard of Barboni, perhaps he might never have become a brigand.

To the young Italian the "old lion" was a hero of romance.

It cut him to the heart to leave him penniless, friendless, and alone.

The chief, once so mighty, now so fallen, was sitting disconsolately at the end of the cave.

He was inwardly chafing at his lot.

His lips moved and twitched, his fists were clenched, and his brows bent over his eyes.

Toro came up to him, and touched his shoulder.

"Old lion," he said, in his rough, cheery voice.

"Ah! Toro," he said, "is it you? I have one friend left in you; all the others have deserted me."

"Good old lion," replied Toro, "take this; it is"—

"Money," cried Barboni, hastily. "What is this for?"

"You will want it. I'm going away for—for some days, and you'll have to shift for yourself."

"Going away—going to leave me," said Barboni, terrified. "This is Hunston's doing, Corpo di Baccho. I warmed a serpent when I took him in. But why should you go? What have I done?"

"Nothing."

"No offense?" asked Barboni.

"None, old lion. Duty calls us. You will find stores in the cave enough for a month. In this locker you shall find ship's biscuits; in this other, wine and spirits; and in this, salt beef. The money is for you when all is gone."

"You have told me a lie," said Barboni, sadly; "you said you were going for a few days on some duty. You tell me I have provisions for a month;

and then add that the money is for my use when the provisions are gone."

"Cospetto, old lion!" stammered Toro, "you're rather sharp upon a fellow."

"No matter," replied Barboni. "I know that I'm left to my fate in my hour of need. No longer pipe, no longer dance. That is the way of the world. Go, good Toro. I thank thee from the bottom of my heart."

"You see, old lion," said Toro, "if you weren't blind"—

"Hush, hush!" interrupted Barboni, solemnly. "Never remind a man of the afflictions sent him by heaven. Perhaps my blindness is a punishment for what men call my crimes. No matter, I am not yet conquered, and I tell you, good Toro, that my heart is big enough to bear this blow."

"Bravo, old lion; give us your paw."

"I will shake hands with you, for you are good to me," said Barboni, jingling the gold in his left hand.

There was a pause.

"Adieu!" said Barboni in a low tone.

"Good-bye, old lion; good luck to you. Keep up your spirits," said Toro.

The next minute he was hurrying over the rocks in the direction taken by the others.

Punctual to the appointment, the two boatmen were on the spot, nor were they surprised to see the friends that Hunston had brought with him.

The chase of the preceding night had frightened them not a little, and the more there were to fight the police in the event of a fresh pursuit, the better for them.

A vigilant look-out was kept, but nothing was seen of the police galley.

An hour's pull brought the boat to the corner of the point, and the silver moon enabled the rowers to see the brig lying at anchor within the distance of a mile.

"Pull away, lads. That's our ship," said Hunston, standing up and handling the tiller with a practiced hand.

"Viva Hunstoni e Tori! Viva! viva!" cried the brigands in chorus.

The two boatmen looked curiously and suspiciously around.

They knew that they were helping a brigand to escape, and guessed that his companions were of the same cut-throat trade.

It was evident, also, that some villainy was in contemplation, but as they were well paid for what they were doing, it mattered little to them what happened.

Their orders were concise.

"Pull alongside," said Hunston, "and when you see the last of me in the chains, drop astern."

"Aye, aye, signor," replied the head boatman.

Each man had received his instructions before starting.

It was determined that an attack should be made in the night when the crew should be off their guard.

The ship did not sail before morning, and it was probable that the captain was enjoying his last hours ashore in some trattoria with his officers and a boat's crew.

This surmise of Hunston's turned out correct.

The ship was neared.

A man on the look-out said, in a drowsy voice:

"Boat ahoy?"

"Ahoy there!" replied Hunston.

"What are you?"

"We bring you a passenger who hasn't forgotten the grog, and you'll be able to splice the main-brace before the captain comes aboard."

"You're welcome, shipmate," replied the look-out; "steer by her headlight. So, larboard side, ship your oars. So. Gently does it."

The brigands held their knives in their mouths, and headed by Hunston and Toro, sprang up the chains like monkeys.

The watch was crowded round to welcome the passenger who had been so considerate as to bring his grog with him.

What was their consternation when they were fiercely attacked and cut down without the slightest warning or provocation.

One after another fell mortally wounded.

Not a word was spoken by the brigands, who

went at their bloodthirsty work with the coolness of practiced butchers.

The deck was cold with blood.

Hearing the heavy falls, the mate and the remainder of the crew rushed up the mainhatch only to meet with the awfully sudden fate of their ill-starred companions.

They were hacked to pieces, and being unarmed, were unable to strike a blow in their own defense.

When the butchery was over, Hunston ordered the bodies to be cast overboard.

An examination of the ship was then made.

Only a cabin-boy was found asleep in the fore-castle, and his life was spared, because he was too young to be mischievous, and it was thought he might be useful.

In fact they derived some valuable information from him.

The captain and five others were ashore, but were expected at the ebb of the tide, which would take place about four in the morning.

It was then eleven.

A strong breeze had sprung up from the land, and Hunston ordered the sails to be set immediately.

There were two Italian and some foreign men-of-war in the bay, and it would have been dangerous to remain and court notice from them.

The brig could make good sailing, but she would have succumbed easily in a few hours to a powerful steamer.

The anchor was weighed, the sails set, and the ship glided unperceived from the spot where she had been lying.

Hunston took command of the vessel.

As for Toro, he was a complete child upon the ocean, though he could do a great deal on land.

It must be admitted that he was willing to aid Hunston, and that he did not feel at all jealous at being second in command.

Before daybreak the ship was far from the Italian coast.

CHAPTER VIII.

MR. MOLE'S DISCOVERY.

On the morning following the shocking crimes we have just narrated, a very happy party was assembled round the breakfast-table of the house in the Strada Di Toledo.

Everything had gone well lately with the English.

The roses had returned to Emily's cheeks since the dispersal of the brigands and the restoration of her darling child.

She was quite well and strong again.

It had come about that Lily Cockles was so pleased with the little coxswain for avenging her brother's death by killing Gus Darrell that she listened favorably to his suit.

They were engaged to be married.

Mr. Mole was quite well again, and his illness acted as a warning to him not to drink too much, and he very rarely plunged into excess, and then only when he spent an evening with Monday in his pantry, talking about old times.

Monday came in while the party were at breakfast.

Everybody looked up eagerly.

"What's that?" asked Jack.

"Me go out this morning, sare, to buy some of um fish for breakfast, and they all talk about brigands taking um ship."

"Capturing a ship! Where?"

"In um bay, sare. They kill all um could, 'cept captain, and two three others who on shore, and then they bolt with um ships. So um say."

"By Jove! that must be Hunston," said Harvey.

"Shouldn't wonder," replied Jack; "the news, though, requires confirmation."

"I wonder," said the little coxswain, "if they have taken Barboni with them."

"Trust Hunston for not being a fool," answered Jack. "He wouldn't be bothered with a blind man who could never do him any good."

"Hunston was always a hard-hearted and perverse child of sin," remarked Mr. Mole.

"Well, gentlemen," said Jack, "I must go out

and hear the news; who'll come with me? Don't all speak at once."

"I will," replied Harvey and Sam in a breath.

"I have promised to go with Mr. Mole," said Walter; "we have a little geological expedition on hand."

"What's that?" asked Jack.

"Geology," replied Mr. Mole, "as you ought to know, Harkaway, is the science or 'logic' of the earth, from the Greek word"—

"In fact," interrupted Jack, "you mean you're going to break stones with a hammer, and see what's inside them."

"That's it," replied Walter, laughing.

The party broke up.

Emily took Jack on one side.

"Have you written a reply to the colonel?" she asked.

"No, dear," he replied.

"What shall you say?"

"I intend to throw up my commission," he answered.

"Oh!" said Emily, "I'm so sorry. Is it not a pity you let this wretched brigand interfere with your professional prospects?"

"I can't help it, Emmy, dear," said Jack. "I must keep my oath, and I don't leave Naples till I see the end of that villain Barboni."

"But"—

"That's flat. It's no use talking."

Emily knew Jack's determined character too well to argue the point with him, and she walked away with a sigh.

Mr. Mole and Walter supplied themselves with a couple of hammers, and a basket in which to place specimens of valuable fossils they might be fortunate enough to find, and started for a walk along the shore.

After walking a few miles several specimens of remarkable fossils were collected, and the rocks becoming rather difficult to travel over, the little coxswain proposed a halt.

Selecting a shady spot, he lighted his pipe, and producing a flask, the geologists refreshed themselves.

"I have had enough of it!" exclaimed Walter, "and shall stay here until you are done."

"Very well," replied Mr. Mole. "I'll just explore the rocks about here, and then we will return."

"Look out for brigands," said Walter. "It was somewhere near this spot that the police galley was attacked."

"I never felt fear in my life," said Mole, grandly, "and I am not going to begin now."

He climbed over the rocks, holding an umbrella to protect his head from the burning sun, until he came to an opening in the rock.

It was the mouth of the cave.

The opportunity seemed favorable for exploring, and satisfying himself that the water was low, and would not come up high enough for some hours to cut off his retreat, he boldly entered.

A good light poured into the cave, which enabled Mr. Mole to see that there was a man seated on a block of stone at the extremity.

"Who goes there? Is it you, good Toro?" said the man, whose quick ears detected the sound of an intrusion.

"I am not Toro," replied Mr. Mole.

"Who are you, then—friend or foe?"

"That depends upon who you are," said Mole.

"Don't attempt any nonsense; I've got a pistol."

"I am unarmed," was the reply, with an impatient sigh, "and were my belt bristling with weapons, I could do you little harm, because I am blind."

"Blind!" repeated Mole, starting.

He had heard that the famous brigand had lost his sight and was the companion of Toro.

Could his good fortune have guided his footsteps in the direction of the brigand chief?

If so, he would have accomplished what neither Harkaway nor all the police in Naples had succeeded in.

"Are you Barboni?" asked Mole.

"I am that unfortunate being," was the calm reply.

The brigand drew himself up with dignity, folded his arms, and turned his sightless orbs in the direction of the intruder's voice.

"Hang me if I didn't think so," said Mole.

"Won't Walter be wild when he finds he is out of this? Bravo, Mole, this is a feather in your cap, sir."

"Do with me what you like," said Barboni.

"It requires consideration," replied Mole. "Are you alone?"

"Quite."

"You are sure that none of your cut-throat associates are likely to come back?" asked Mole, exhibiting a slight nervousness.

"There is no chance of that. They have all left me."

"All?"

"Every one," said Barboni.

"Can you give me any information respecting a party of the name of Hunston, with whom I was formerly acquainted?"

"He has gone with Toro, after insulting and robbing me."

"Ah, he was always a bad lot," said Mr. Mole.

"You speak Italian with a foreign accent," said Barboni. "Are you English?"

"I am."

"Then, sir," said Barboni, "I suppose my hour has come. I may as well die at once as linger on in misery, to perish of neglect and starvation, aggravated by a broken heart."

"I feel sorry for you," said Mole.

"Does that sentiment come from your heart?" asked Barboni, eagerly.

"Certainly it does. I once saw a wounded lion, and at another time an eagle with a broken wing. Those creatures were types of fallen grandeur in their way, and I felt sorry for them."

"I should like you to do me a favor. It will be the last I shall ever ask of mortal man," said Barboni.

"Name it."

"Let me explain first why I make the request."

"Certainly," replied Mole.

"I should like to avoid a public execution, following upon a tiresome trial, and it would give me pleasure to baulk Mr. Harkaway of his triumph."

"Yes, yes; that is only natural."

"Will you, sir, take out your pistol, place the muzzle to my head as I sit here, and finish me out of hand?"

"No," replied Mole, decisively, "I will not."

The expression of hope which had lighted up the brigand's face died out, leaving his features a blank again.

"You refuse?"

"Decidedly I do, and for this reason. I never, in the course of all my wanderings, took a life in cold blood."

"But I ask you to take mine," urged Barboni.

"That makes very little difference, and scarcely removes the affair from the crime of deliberate murder," said Mole.

"Say no more; I am your prisoner. Load me with chains and drag me in triumph into Naples. It will be a glorious deed to have captured the poor, blind brigand."

The sarcasm was not lost upon Mole.

"You judge me wrongly again," he said.

"How?"

"By supposing that I should be guilty of such meanness."

"Speak plainly, man!" cried Barboni, impatiently, and do not torture me with suspense. What are you going to do with me?"

"I shall leave you as I found you."

"But you will send the police here."

"Not at all. I pity you as a fallen foe, and I respect you as a brave man, though you have outraged humanity," said Mole.

"Sir," replied Barboni, "I thank you; your generosity is that of a true-bred gentleman."

"I am not a preacher," continued Mole. "But there is such a thing as repentance."

"I never repented any one act of my life," replied Barboni, fiercely.

"Consider," said Mole, "that forgiveness of sins is"—

"Rubbish! *Santo Dio!* am I a woman to listen to such tales? Go, sir, leave me to my misery and my solitude. I would be alone."

"I wish you a happy issue out of all your afflictions," said Mole, kindly.

He was about to retire when the brigand spoke:

"Your name, sir?" he said.

"My name is Mole."

"Thank you. It shall be the last on my lips, and I shall remember it as that of a generous and true gentleman. *Adio, amico mio.*"

Mr. Mole now left the cave, very much excited at the strange scene which had just taken place.

It had cost him a struggle to forego the capture of the brigand chief.

But the higher qualities of his nature had asserted themselves, and he thought he should have been a coward to betray the poor, broken-down, blind creature into the hands of his enemies.

When he reached the little coxswain, the latter saw that something unusual had happened.

"Where have you been?" he asked.

"Up the rocks," replied Mole.

"I lost sight of you."

"Very likely."

"I say, you have had a bad scare; what have you seen?" asked Walter.

"Don't ask me any questions," replied Mr. Mole.

"Now, look here, what is it?"

There was no answer.

"Brigands?"

Still Mr. Mole was silent.

If he answered he would betray Barboni, and he intended to keep the secret.

"If you won't speak, you'd better go home," said Walter.

"That's what I mean to do," replied Mole; "you will come with me, of course."

"No."

"You won't?"

"Not just yet. I want to finish my pipe."

"All right, I will leave you," said Mole, glad of a chance of getting away without being subjected to further questioning.

He did not think it likely that Walter Campbell would explore the rocks, or, if he did, that he would find the cave.

But this was just what the young gentleman intended to do.

Walter for a little time lazily watched the smoke curl up from the bowl of his pipe, and listened to the noise made by the incoming tide, as the waves beat restlessly on the shore.

But when Mole was out of sight, he got up and stretched himself.

Two men in a boat were rowing along towards Naples.

They were boatmen on the look-out for a fare.

Seeing Walter extend his arms, they thought he was signaling them to stop.

"Want a boat, signor?" said one. "Take you back to Naples for three ducats."

"Done, with you," said Walter, glad of the chance. "But first of all, beach your boat and come here."

The two men did as he directed them, and advanced, respectfully saluting him by touching their caps.

"Follow me up these rocks," he said.

The men hesitated.

"What are you afraid of?" he asked.

"They say there are brigands up there, signor?"

"Where?"

"In a cave."

"As I suspected," replied Walter. "Well, stay where you are till I come back."

He looked at his pistol, saw it was capped and ready for firing.

Then he climbed over the rocks in the direction he had seen Mr. Mole take.

After a time he came to the entrance to the cave and peered in.

He saw a man whom he instantly recognized as Barboni.

The brigand was groping about the cave as if he wished to find something.

At last he uttered a cry of joy.

His hand had come in contact with a pistol, and he clutched it eagerly, feeling the nipple to see if there was a cap on it.

"At last! at last!" he said. "I can now do what the generous Englishman refused. Barboni shall die by his own hand."

The little coxswain understood the situation in a moment.

Barboni was going to commit suicide.

He was just in time.

Had he been a few minutes later, he would have

found nothing but the gory corpse of the great brigand chief, and a smoking pistol by his side.

Raising himself on a level with the ledge, he crept along as noiselessly as a cat after a bird.

Barboni presented the pistol to his head.

The next moment Walter was upon him with a bound.

A vigorous blow sent the pistol flying to the further end of the cave before he could draw the trigger.

"No, you don't," he said.

Barboni was baffled.

"Ha!" he cried; "who is this? May a curse light on you for this."

"I am the little coxswain, my tulip," was the reply; "and you've got to come with me to Naples; I've got a boat waiting, and we shall do it in style."

Barboni groaned.

"Never, never!" he said, furiously. "I will die first! Stand on one side; let me throw myself over the rocks."

Walter did not hesitate a moment.

He threw him on the blind man and tried to hurl him to the earth.

A fearful struggle ensued.

Locked in one another's arms, they rocked to and fro like poplars in a storm.

At length Barboni's foot slipped, and he fell heavily on the back of his head.

For a time he was stunned.

Rushing to the mouth of the cave, Walter beckoned to the boatman.

"Come here," he said. "I have captured Barboni; done it all myself; there's no danger. Come at once; you shall be well rewarded."

The men talked together for a moment, and then they decided to go.

Reaching the cave, they helped to bind the brigand's arms, and with considerable exertion they carried him to the boat.

He was placed in the stern sheets.

Walter took the tiller, and the men rowed with a will to Naples.

Barboni was in a state of semi-consciousness, and neither moved nor uttered a sound.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SPY'S FATE.

WHILE this important capture was being made by the little coxswain, an event of great interest was taking place on the other side of the city.

Jack, Harvey and Clear-the-Track Sam had wandered into the country, after gleaning all the news they could respecting the seizure of the brig and the massacre of the crew.

It was the general opinion that Hunston and Toro had got off in the vessel.

Two ships-of-war were dispatched in pursuit, though the chances of Hunston's capture was slight, as it was impossible to say what direction he had sailed.

Jack and his friends had lately made it their custom to preambulate the country, and question the peasantry, in the hope of obtaining some information which would lead to the discovery of Barboni.

They were all anxious to get home.

The chase was becoming tiresome and monotonous now; everyone wishing to end it.

That the old fox was hiding somewhere they had no doubt.

But in what locality no one could say.

The road they had selected on this occasion was by the shore.

Suddenly Harvey said:

"I see some one coming towards us."

"Where?" asked Jack.

"Right ahead. He's dodging behind those rocks; look out. There he is again."

But though Jack looked, he could not see anyone.

"He's up to no good if he's dodging us, that's certain," he said.

"It looked like Bigamini," cried Harvey.

"Nonsense."

"It did. The fellow had just his cut and slinking walk."

"I should jolly well like to put my finger upon that gentleman," said Jack.

"So should I, the scoundrel. He's worse than Barboni by a long chalk," replied Harvey.

"Look, look!" said Clear-the-Track, "he's bolted. See him scudding along; I guess he's powerful frit."

"Unslung your rifle."

Sam did so.

He was the only one who had brought a rifle with him.

"Shall I drop him?" he asked.

"If you can."

"Guess I'd drop a fly at three hundred yards—steady does it."

Sam dropped on one knee, and took a steady aim.

"Don't kill him," said Jack. "Put a ball in his leg."

"Right."

The little man, whoever he was, had smelt danger in the air, and was running along the sand at his best pace.

The American fired.

There was a sharp cry, and the runaway fell flat on his face, uttering such horrid yells, that it was easy to tell that he was not killed.

The three friends ran up quickly.

It was as Harvey had conjectured.

The shrieking wretch writhing with pain before them, was Bigamini, the spy of the brigands, the traitor who had betrayed them on every occasion.

His hand was red with a dozen murders, and his worthless life forfeited over and over again to the law.

He had been crawling along the sea-shore, hoping to find a boat which would take him to some ship in the bay.

But Nemesis had dogged his heels closely.

He had fallen into the hands of his enemies when he least expected it.

"What did you want to go and shoot at me as if I was a sand-martin, or a rabbit?" he moaned.

"Are you hurt?" asked Jack.

"Oh, Lord! ain't I? Wish you'd got it, begging your pardon, Mr. Harkaway," sir, rejoined the spy.

"Where?"

"The ball lodged in my—my end, sir."

"He means in the seat of honor," said Sam, with a laugh; "I aimed too high."

Bigamini was shot in the fleshy part of his back. He rolled over and over, scratching at the sand, and moaning dismally.

"What's to be done with him?" asked Jack.

"Oh, spare me, sir; spare me, Mr. Harkaway," cried Bigamini. "I'm only a wretched Bigamini, sir. Once I was a happy"—

"Silence!" thundered Jack.

"Let's try him by court-martial," said Clear-the-Track.

"Very good idea. I'll be judge," said Jack.

"I prosecute, and Harvey shall defend the prisoner," said Sam.

"Let him lie there," continued Jack. "I'll sit on this rock. Now, Clear-the-Track, you start."

Sam laughed and drew himself up, while Bigamini, who did not know whether this was a joke or not, stopped his howling.

His cunning gray eyes watched first one and then the other, with the most intense interest.

"May it please this honorable court," began Sam, "I appear for the prosecution of the prisoner at the bar. His name is Bigamini, and he's the biggest villain unhung, I guess."

"Order," said Jack.

"By the court's pardon I will say that the prisoner was the spy of Barboni, the brigand."

"He made me do it, gentlemen," whined Bigamini.

"Silence!" roared Jack.

"He betrayed us to Barboni, and is responsible for Tom Carden's death."

"I never touched him, sir," said Bigamini.

"Si—lence! Kick him, Dick, if he won't be quiet."

"Oh, my latter end!" groaned Bigamini; "if you had a bullet in your end, you'd squeal a bit, gentlemen."

"The prisoner at the bar," continued Sam, "murdered his wife. He also stole young Jack, and I think he deserves to die."

"Oh, spare me, gents, spare me," cried Bigamini.

"Do you plead guilty?" asked Jack.

"Yes, sir, I'm guilty, but"—

"That's enough. I don't think I need call on the learned counsel for the defense after this admission."

"I bow to the decision of the court," said Harvey.

"It only remains for me to pass sentence," continued Jack.

There was a dead silence.

Bigamini trembled all over.

He saw that this was not a ghastly joke, but a terrible reality.

Soon it would end in an awful tragedy.

His tongue clove to the roof of his mouth with terror, and he nearly fainted.

"The sentence of this honorable court is, that the prisoner, Bigamini, spy, murderer and abductor of children, who has just pleaded guilty to the several charges in the indictment, shall be condemned to death," said Jack.

He paused.

"Have you anything to say, prisoner, why sentence of death should not be passed upon you?" he added.

Bigamini said nothing.

He only stared stupidly with his twinkling eyes.

"You shall be buried at low watermark, and be gradually drowned," continued Jack, "so that you may have time to repent, and may heaven have mercy upon your soul."

Harvey and Sam nodded their heads, to intimate that they thoroughly approved of the sentence.

The three friends looked about for some shells with which to dig a hole in the sand big enough to receive the culprit's body.

Bigamini turned his head and watched them like one in a dream.

Neither spoke a word.

They were all terribly in earnest.

The spy was bleeding slowly from his wound, and the red blood sank into the thirsty sand.

But neither pain nor fright could wring a sound from him now.

His mind was stunned.

At a moment when he hoped to get off with all his money, he was captured and condemned to death.

Jack seemed determined not to give him another chance.

All compassion was dead in the hearts of his captors.

So numerous had been his crimes, so atrocious had been his conduct, and so infamous his treachery, that he had placed himself without the pale of mercy.

He saw these stern, relentless men digging his grave.

Slowly but surely the dreadful work proceeded.

The hole grew deeper.

It was a little after the ebb, and the tide was flowing sluggishly in.

About an hour's time was required for the water to flow over the spot where his executioners were working.

How terrible must have been the wretched coward's thoughts at that moment.

How inexpressibly bitter.

"How deep?" asked Sam, who was down in the hole.

"What's his height?" asked Jack.

"Four foot nothing, I guess."

"Make it four feet."

"Right. Clear the track."

The work went on until the grave was dug.

By this time the tide was drawing perilously near.

One wave larger than the rest had rolled up to within a couple of yards of it.

Jack went up to the prisoner, and took him by the scruff of the neck as he would have done a rat.

Bigamini shivered.

The imminence of his danger made him find his tongue.

"Oh, sir—oh! Mr. Harkaway—kind, good gentleman—sir, have pity!" he gasped.

"What pity have you shown your victims?" replied Jack.

Bigamini was silent.

"Did you think of my friends or myself when you carried news of our movements to Barboni?"

"I was his spy, sir."

"Did you show the witch any mercy, or—but it is a waste of time to talk to you."

As he spoke he dropped the spy into the hole.

"Shovel away!" he said.

Clear-the-Track and Harvey instantly began to pour in the sand, which they trod down with their feet.

At length Bigamini was firmly imbedded.

They proceeded very much as a man does who is planting a tree.

Only the spy's head remained above the surface.

"All done," said Harvey.

"Fall back," said Jack.

The three men retreated, and as they had placed the condemned man's face towards the sea, they could only see the back of his head.

His plaintive wails and exclamations, however, were distinctly audible, mingled with the mournful splashings of the waves.

"Oh, sir—kind sir, spare me," he cried. "I ain't so bad as you think. I might have killed your child, but I didn't."

An approaching wave higher than others, rolled up to his chin, and splashed into his open mouth.

The salt water made him choke.

"Lord help me, I can't breathe!" he continued.

"What right have you to kill me? You're no legal judges."

"We are doing a righteous deed in ridding the earth of a contemptible monster," said Jack.

Another and another wave broke over him.

There was water all around him now, and it was quickly circling in foaming wavelets up to his chin.

The man's last moments were spent in prayer.

He went mad, and cursed his enemies in language too terrible to be written.

Jack turned away in sickening horror

CHAPTER X.

BIGAMINI DEPARTS ON HIS VOYAGE.

HARKAWAY and his friends turned to go.

Though by no means prudish, their ears were offended by the fearful torrent of imprecations Bigamini poured out.

"I reckon I never heard a chap cuss like that but once, and that was out west in California," observed Sam, as they turned away.

"It must have been awful if it was worse than this," said Harvey.

"Yes. I was making tracks for an hotel in a wildish bit of the country, when I came upon a train of wagons drawn by mules.

"There was a softish bit of road close at hand, and I stood up to see how they would get through it.

"The first wagon got through all right, so did the second, but the third stuck fast.

"The driver shouted, swore, and cracked his whip, but it was no go. Those behind—there were a dozen teams altogether—began to get impatient; as well as they might, for it was getting nigh supper time, and they were still a mile from the hotel, where they calculated upon finding some of the tallest kind of feeding.

"At last a long slab of a coon from Vermont, who had charge of the hindmost team came up.

"He was a very mild-looking, fair complexioned fellow, and you'd have thought molasses candy couldn't be sweeter, as he gently said to the driver of the stranded team:

"My good friend, can I help you?"

"The other driver guessed he might if he could, so the Vermont man took hold of the halter of the near side leading mule, and said, just as gently as before:

"Kick up here, mules."

"And there was something in his manner very persuasive, for every mule strained at the traces except one obstinate beast that resolutely arched its spine and hung back.

"Kim up, mule," repeated the Vermont man, "kim up, you ugly old"—

"Well, I can't repeat all he said, but for ten minutes that Vermont man poured out a perfect flood of the wildest blasphemy, till I almost feared the earth would open and swallow us up.

"But the obstinate beast gradually relaxed, till just as the Vermont man's oaths came to a climax,

all the beasts gave a strain, and the wagon rolled on out of the mire.

"I saw the Vermont fellow afterwards at the bar of the hotel, where I went to get a dust cutter."

"What is a dust cutter?" Jack asked.

"A nip of whisky straight, and a prime thing it is, too, to cut its way through the dust when your throat is filled. The Vermont man and the driver of the stranded team were liquoring up together, and the latter said, in a very admiring tone:

"Well, Ned, you can sw'ar, I bet."

"Me sw'ar?" replied he of Vermont, modestly; "why, stranger, I can't cuss as much as is worth a cent. But you oughter just hear old Zeke Jackson. He can exhort the impenitent animals. Why, stranger, I've knowed a mule renounce all the poms and vanities of this world, and haul four tons through a foot of clay, when old Zeke was holding forth."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed our friends, but their laughter died away, as a most unearthly wail of agony from the lips of the unfortunate Bigamini reached their ears.

"It's rather a cold-blooded thing, after all, to leave him there to be drowned," said Harvey. Don't you think so, Jack?"

Jack nodded and replied:

"I've just been thinking that we are rather exceeding the limits of just vengeance. Let us get him up before it is too late."

"Go ahead, then, boss!" exclaimed Clear-the-Track.

They rushed back at full speed.

Of a surety, the wretched spy was in a pitiful case, for each wave, as it touched the shore, rolled up over his head, and it was only at intervals that he could breathe and cough out the salt water that filled his nostrils and mouth.

The three friends dashed into the water and commenced removing the sand, Harkaway using a flat piece of wood—a broken oar-blade that had just been washed up.

But it was slow work, for every moment the water was getting deeper, and each wave in its advance, washed some sand back into the hole.

"Clear the track!" exclaimed the Yankee, shouting his war cry. "Here, fix this rope round the skunk's body just under his arms; then a good strong pull and out he comes."

In an instant the suggestion was acted upon, and with all the force of their muscular arms, the three friends pulled away at the body of the spy.

But the wet sand held him most tenaciously, and it was only just possible for them to extricate him.

However, they did at length—when his legs were almost dislocated—manage to drag him from his perilous position.

"Blame the confounded skunk!" ejaculated Clear-the-Track. "I fancy he's drowned, after all."

"No," said Harvey, "see, he moves."

"He's bound to die a Jrier death," said Jack.

"Of which this rope we've hauled him out with is an emblem," was the remark of Clear-the-Track Sam.

One or two slight movements of the face and limbs convinced Jack Harkaway and his friends that the wretched spy was still alive.

So they poured a little drop of whisky down his throat, a proceeding which soon effected a complete cure.

"Oh, once I was a happy Smiffins, but now I am a very miserable, half-drowned Bigamini," muttered the poor wretch.

"What are we going to do with him now?" asked Harvey.

"I hardly know," replied Jack. "It won't do to leave him about this neighborhood. If we do, he is sure to take to murder and robbery again."

"Take him to Naples," suggested Clear-the-Track.

"No good; yet I don't know that it would not be the best plan."

Now Bigamini had been listening to his tormentors, being very anxious indeed to know what they intended doing with him.

He felt convinced by this time that his life was to be spared, though, far from feeling grateful, he

resolved in his own mind never to miss an opportunity of doing an injury to the three friends.

But going back to Naples, where, perhaps, some ugly disclosures might be made respecting past transactions, did not suit him at all.

He therefore opened his eyes, and began moaning:

"Oh, noble gentleman, for Heaven's sake, have pity on one who was once a happy"—

"Shut up! I don't want that kind of gammon," Jack said, very sharply.

"If you are not quiet, we'll bury you again, head downwards," said Clear-the-Track.

"Oh, gentleman, listen to the prayer of a miserable Bigamini. Don't take me to Naples. Do what you like with me except that. Send me to sea in an open boat, without oars, sail, or provisions, if you like, but don't take me to Naples."

Jack gave him a gentle touch with his toe, not far from the spot where the American's bullet had penetrated, and bade him rise, an order which the wretched spy was constrained to obey.

Bigamini was drenched to the skin with salt water, and the damp sand clung to his clothing.

Ever and anon, he rubbed the wounded part, which the salt water caused to smart terribly, though it had stopped the bleeding.

"Now walk on in front of us," said Jack.

"And remember," added Clear-the-Track Sam, "if you attempt to escape, I swear by the ghost of General Jackson, I'll let daylight through the other end of you."

By way of convincing Bigamini that he was in earnest, the young American reloaded his rifle.

They kept along the beach, going towards Naples.

Had it not been for Clear-the-Track's threat, Bigamini would have bolted, but he had a wholesome fear of the rifle, and knew that an attempt to escape would be followed by swift punishment.

When they had gone something like a couple of miles, they came in sight of a little fishing village, where some eight or ten boats were drawn upon the beach.

Telling Harvey and Sam to guard their prisoner carefully, Jack Harkaway strode forward and entered into a bargain with the fisherman.

One boat he purchased outright, paying for it in gold, with a liberality that fairly astonished the vender.

Another small craft he hired.

"Shall I assist you to row, signor?" asked the man.

"No," replied the former "stroke" of the Oxford eight; "launch the boats, fasten the bow of the small one to the stern of the larger, and then I shall need no assistance."

The man did as desired, smiling at the difficulties he expected the English signor would encounter when he got into the boat.

But when Jack took up the oars and commenced rowing, his smile changed into a prolonged stare of astonishment.

"Per Baccho! These English signori are devils," he exclaimed.

Jack soon ran his two boats aground just where Sam and Harvey were waiting with their prisoner.

"In with you," exclaimed our hero. "You Bigamini, in the small boat, Harvey and Sam with me."

Bigamini hesitated, but Clear-the-Track's rifle soon compelled obedience.

"What are you a going to do with me, Mr. Harkaway?" he asked.

"You said you would rather be sent to sea in an open boat without oars or sail, so you shall have that treat. Come, Dick, take an oar, and we'll give this beggar a ride free gratis for nothing, as poor Sidney Dawson's scout used to say."

"For Heaven's sake," he began, but the American, who sat in the stern of the larger boat jerked that Bigamini occupied up and down in such a manner that the spy was compelled to devote all his attention to the preservation of his balance, and therefore held his tongue.

Jack and Harvey pulled away as though they had been pulling for a wager.

Objects on shore grew smaller and smaller as they receded from it.

Presently a breeze came off the land, then Jack

dropped his oar and hoisted a small mast and sail, which formed part of the equipment of the boat.

Then merrily away before the wind, till the coast line became hazy, and finally vanished entirely.

They were beyond sight of land.

Jack then lowered his sail, and resuming his oars pulled round and around in a circle for some little time, to "puzzle the beggar," as he said.

When Jack had finished, he untied the rope which had held Bigamini's boat to his own, and allowed the spy to drift away.

"Mr. Harkaway," shrieked the wretch, "this 'ere is murder! Give us a chance for life; leave us one of them oars to guide the boat with."

Jack and his friends held a short consultation, the result of which was that Bigamini was permitted to keep both oars; and Clear-the-Track, at the last moment, threw to him a leather covered flask, half full of whisky.

Then they hoisted sail and bore away, leaving Bigamini afloat on the Mediterranean.

"We have been in a worse fix than his, eh, Dick?" said Jack, looking back at the spy, who was a very bad oarsman.

"We have," replied Harvey; "and we had done nothing very bad to deserve such luck."

"There are many chances in his favor. He is almost certain to be picked up by some passing vessel."

In an hour they had sighted land again.

Bigamini and his little boat could no longer be seen.

Jack steered direct for Naples, guiding himself by a small compass attached to his watch chain.

It was late in the evening, and the wind was blowing half a gale, when they landed.

A poor look-out for Bigamini, they all agreed, yet they felt happier at the thought that they had at all events given him a chance of saving his own life.

It would have been unlike Jack's manly character to have allowed him to drown in that hole in the sands.

But what of Bigamini himself?

He knew little of rowing, and a current was running fast, so that in spite of his endeavors to follow our hero, he was unable to do so.

Presently he was all alone.

Then he began to curse, but that did no good, so he applied to the whisky flask; and under the influence of a draught, hope once more began to whisper in his ear.

A ship might pass and pick him up.

But when the night was darkest, Bigamini's guilty conscience began to people the surrounding space with spirits of his many victims.

There was the old witch, his own wife, and many others whose days were shortened by his agency; and they seemed to howl in his ear that the time of vengeance was at hand.

The fearful visions he conjured up would not be laid by repeated applications to the whisky flask, so the wretched little tailor laid down in the bottom of the boat, and cursed his ill fate till daylight chased away the phantoms with which darkness had surrounded him.

And so the next night was passed by him, as also the third and the fourth. Bigamini had long since given up rowing, so that the fourth day found him drifting with the wind and current.

Certainly the fates had not treated him kindly, but then he deserved no kindness, for his hand had been against every man.

Five days and nights did he toss about in his boat, in a state almost verging on madness, sometimes blaspheming, at others whistling and singing.

And the idea of death, which at first had been very terrible, now seemed more familiar—nay, he even went so far as to contemplate it as a means of putting an end to the miseries he endured.

"Hang it, who is afraid?" he exclaimed. "Every man must die. A man can die but once, and when it is over there is an end."

Bigamini tried to look extremely brave and resolute as he uttered these words, but when he remembered that there was no one at hand to be surprised at his bravery, he relaxed a little.

"I wonder if that *would* be the end. I don't know much about it, but when I was a happy Smiffins I used to hear about another state, about

rewards and punishments. Now, if that's true, the old one below will have me, that's certain."

He paused a moment, but suddenly mustering up resolution, he shrieked:

"Curse me! I'll think about it no longer. I am not afraid of death, so here goes."

With which words Bigamini struggled to his feet, and after one last despairing look around threw himself head foremost into the blue sea.

CHAPTER XI.

THE EXECUTION OF THE BRIGAND CHIEF.

WHEN the three friends reached the Strada Di Toledo, they were surprised to see Monday performing extraordinary antics on the door-step.

"Hallo!" said Sam. "Look at the Kinki's head cutting up Jim Crow capers. Look at him. He's gone clean off his cocoanut."

"What's the row, Monday?" asked Jack.

"Um caught the brigand, sare," replied Monday.

"Who has?"

"Mast' Walter. Him just come back with um."

"Are you really in earnest?" said Jack, whose eyes burned lustroously.

"Me see um, sare, lodged in um jail. All Naples got um flags out. The general him been here."

"This is great news," said Jack.

"Immense," remarked Harvey.

"Guess the little coxswain's a big chap," observed Clear-the-Track.

"Our task is nearly ended," said Jack, who ran up stairs to his wife.

Emily no sooner saw him than she threw herself into his arms, sobbing with joy.

"Have you heard the news, dearest?" he asked.

"Oh, yes!"

"It's all over now," continued Jack.

"Thank God, Jack, thank God!" said Emily.

Placing her on a sofa, he entered the next room, where he found Mr. Mole and Walter Campbell engaged in a hot discussion.

"I tell you straight," said Walter, "that I captured the brigand."

"And I tell you, sir," replied Mr. Mole, "that I found him first."

"Why didn't you collar him, then?"

"Because I had too much generosity to hand a poor, broken-down blind man over to the police."

"And I hadn't, you see. That is just the difference."

"It's my find," said Mole, doggedly.

"And it's my capture," replied Walter, with equal doggedness.

"My dear fellows," said Jack, "I congratulate you both. Why grumble over the matter? You have got the scoundrel, and that ought to be enough for you."

"But it isn't," said Walter. "Mole says he did it all, and he didn't."

"I found him," replied Mr. Mole, "and I let him alone, out of pity."

"More fool you," said Walter.

"Mr. Campbell," replied Mr. Mole, "I will not put up with such language from you or anyone."

"Then do the other thing."

"What's that, may I ask?"

"Lump it."

"Just what I might expect from a Cambridge man," said Mole, with a sneer.

"Don't you run Cambridge down."

"Look here," said Jack. "I won't have it. This is not the time for a row. Stash it, young one. I have something to tell you."

"He's so jolly aggravating, the old humbug," said Walter.

"You have captured the brigand"—

"No, I did it," said Mole.

"Well, you did it between you, sir. Will that do? And if you've done one big thing, we've done another."

"What's that?"

"We've been lucky enough to settle Bigamini."

"The bigger thief of the two," said Walter.

"The last snake in the nest," said Mr. Mole.

"We'll have a champagne cup, as well iced as Monday can do it," said Jack, "and sink all our differences in the flowing bowl."

"Hurrah!" cried Walter. "I am sorry, though, there are no more brigands to kill."

"We will drown our differences, Harkaway, in the flowing bowl," cried Mr. Mole.

"That's right," replied Jack.

"This is a great day, a very great day, and I shall always observe it as such," cried Mole.

"We've licked, after all, and if it wasn't for Carden's loss"—said Walter.

"Hush!" whispered Jack, "we musn't conjure up ghosts. I regret poor Tom as much as anyone. But I mean to be jolly to-night all the same."

"Shall we give a cheer?" asked Walter.

"Yes," replied Jack.

"A regular rouser?"

"Yes."

"One that will be heard in the street?"

"Yes. Here come Dick and Sam; let them have it. We'll illuminate the house to-night."

"Take the tip from me, then. Join us, you fellows," said the little coxswain, who was much excited. "Ready?"

There was a general response in the affirmative.

"Hip, hip, hip! hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!"

"For we are jolly good fellows—

For we are jolly good fellows—

For we are jolly good fellows—

And so say all of us.

"Hip, hip, hip! hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!"

"It's a way we have in the army,

It's a way we have in the navy,

It's a way we have at the 'varsity,

To drink a fellow's health.

"Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!"

The lazy Neapolitans who were passing by stopped in the street to listen, wondering what the noise meant.

The evening passed very pleasantly.

General Cialdini would have had Barboni tried by a court-martial, but as he was not captured by the military, it was decided that he must appear before the ordinary criminal court.

The indictment against him was a very long one.

Barboni did not employ counsel.

He refused all efforts of assistance.

At length the day of the trial came on, and the court was crowded.

The counsel for the crown had a very large brief, and seemed anxious to make a long speech.

Led in by the jailers, Barboni took his place in the dock.

His steps were faltering, but when he knew where he had to stand, he drew himself up, and remained perfectly erect.

The indictment was read out.

Then the usher of the court ordered silence, and the great brigand was asked if he pleaded guilty or not guilty.

"My lord president of this court," said Barboni, "I have fallen upon evil times, and knowing that my fate is already decided, I plead guilty to the charges brought against me."

The judge proceeded to pass sentence upon him.

This was that he should be hanged by the neck in the public plaza until he was dead.

The jailers then led him away.

One week was allowed to elapse between the sentence and the execution.

The day before the one appointed for the execution, Barboni sent for Harkaway.

Jack went to the prison.

He was conducted into the condemned cell, where he found Barboni awaiting him.

To Jack's astonishment he advanced towards him, and held out his hand.

Jack drew back.

"I thought you were blind," he said.

"I was; but I have engaged the best surgical skill since I have been here, and my sight is partially restored to me," replied Barboni.

"Why have you sent for me?"

"Because I wish you to complete the work you have begun."

"In what way?"

"It is my intention to do justice to Lady Darrel and her son. Here is my written confession. Take it, and you will find that they will have little difficulty in regaining their own."

Jack took the document.

"I am glad that you have made reparation," he said.

"Why have I done it?" said Barboni; "why? because I loved the woman. You do not suppose, Mr. Harkaway, that the fear of death affects me." He laughed scornfully.

"I have faced it too often to think that it has any terrors. No, no, I have a tinge of English blood in my veins, and the English are not generally afraid of death."

"Have you English blood in you?" asked Jack.

"Yes."

"How is that?"

"My father was an Englishman," replied Barboni, proudly.

"Have you anything else to say to me?" queried Jack.

"Won't you shake hands with the brigand, Mr. Harkaway?"

"Thank you for the honor, but"—

"You'd rather not, eh?" said Barboni, with a smile, seeing he hesitated.

"Exactly."

"Yet you did not mind being friendly with the Prince Di Villanova, and I and the prince are one and the same person."

"I was not to know that," said Jack.

"Well, I'm sorry I made the offer. If you have your pride, I have mine," said Barboni.

Jack made no reply.

"You seem to forget that I was a generous enemy," continued Barboni.

"In what way?"

"I spared the life of your friend, Mr. Carden, when I had him in my power."

"Well?"

"And when you were my prisoner I did not order you to be stabbed or shot."

"That's true," said Jack; "but there is no knowing what you might have done if my faithful Monday had not rescued me."

"Go, Mr. Harkaway," said Barboni. "I have found you a brave enemy, and the luck is on your side now."

"You only meet with the fate you might have expected," said Jack, "and I tell you I have no sympathy for you."

"I do not want it."

The brigand waved his hand loftily, and Jack retired with his confession in his pocket.

It was singular that the sight of this remarkable criminal should have been restored by surgical skill on the eve of his execution.

It would only enable him to see the surging crowd.

To behold the ghastly scaffold and the hideous gibbet from which he was to swing from this world into all eternity.

When the morning of the fatal day came, the friends prepared to go and witness the execution.

All Naples was *en fete*.

An execution was always a holiday with the Neapolitans.

And the death of such a distinguished man as Barboni had made himself, was certainly an opportunity for sight-seeing such as the most idle and listless of the lazaroni could not resist.

Jack and his friends took a window overlooking the square where the scaffold was erected.

They were rather grave than otherwise, for death is a sombre thing to contemplate when it comes with all the funeral trappings of the criminal law.

At ten o'clock the plaza was densely thronged.

A vast number of citizens had taken up favorable positions over night.

Troops were posted in every position of vantage.

It was determined this time by the authorities to guard against a surprise.

No one, however daring, could hope to rescue Barboni.

At a quarter past ten he came into the square.

A priest walked by his side, and holding up a cross, he exhorted him to listen to the ministrations of religion.

But the brigand shook his head.

He turned a deaf ear to him.

As he lived, he died—an infidel.

He mounted the scaffold with a firm step, and did not shrink when the rope was placed round his neck.

Turning to the populace, he attempted to make a speech.

"Good people," he said, "I am the victim of English hate and persecution, but I die hurling defiance against heaven and earth."

A thrill of horror ran through the spectators.

The executioner obeyed a sign from the priest.

He dropped the bolt.

Barboni fell into the gulf, just as the impious words left his lips.

He hung suspended before the gaping crowd.

His limbs twitched convulsively for more than a minute.

Then he ceased to exist.

Such was the end of Barboni, the brigand chief, who was publicly hanged, as a punishment for his misdeeds, in the sight of the major part of the population of Naples.

Jack only wished to satisfy himself that the miscreant was dead.

It had occurred to him that Hunston and Toro might try to effect a rescue, though he did not think such a thing at all likely.

Quitting the sickening spectacle, they all returned home.

CHAPTER XII.

THE STRANGE ADVENTURES OF A CASTAWAY.

OUR readers perhaps imagine that we have entirely finished the career of Bigamini with his desperate attempt at suicide as recorded in the previous chapter.

Never was a greater mistake.

Within two minutes after his plunge, Bigamini was in his boat again, and that, too, without the aid of any special intervention of Providence.

It came to pass in this manner.

While descending through the water, Bigamini not only saw, but actually touched, a large fish of the kind known to the Mediterranean fishers as the tunny.

The fish was horribly scared, and swam away, while Bigamini, being under the impression that it was a shark, struck vigorously upwards, regained the surface of the water, and scrambled towards his boat, which was only a couple of feet off.

"Not for me!" he exclaimed, as he climbed over the gunwale. "I don't want that chap's jaws a-smashing and crashing through my bones. If it was only peaceful drowning, I wouldn't mind; but fond as I am of fishing, I don't care to be the bait."

So he laid himself down to dry in the sun in a condition not to be envied by any human being, shivering with cold, hungry and thirsty, but with all his suicide notions taken completely out of him.

But he still raved as much as ever.

At length, at about midnight, when it was extremely dark, and when cold and hunger had almost overcome him, he beheld a light at a distance.

"It is a star," was Bigamini's first thought, but a few seconds' reflection convinced him the atmosphere was too thick to allow any starlight to penetrate.

It must be a ship's light.

He looked, he shouted with all the force of his lungs, but still the light did not move, or if it did, it approached by such imperceptible degrees that it gave him little or no hope.

At last it died away.

Bigamini then gave way to despair again.

But as day broke, hope once more gained the ascendant, for, to his inexpressible delight, he beheld a sail at a very little distance.

Bigamini did everything he could to attract attention, and soon had the satisfaction of perceiving that he had been noticed.

The sea was calm.

The course of the vessel brought her within five hundred yards of the castaway.

A boat was lowered, and in a very short time Bigamini was on the deck of the good ship "Cato," bound from the Black Sea to Brazil.

As soon as some refreshment had revived the wretched Bigamini a little, the captain of the

"Cato," a stalwart Englishman, named Hughes, very naturally wished to know what had happened that he chanced to be floating about alone.

Now Bigamini, in his intense joy at being once more saved, had not thought of that.

Of course he had not the remotest intention of speaking the truth.

The only thing was to hatch a yarn which should bear some resemblance of probability without going too much into detail. So, after a good deal of stammering and hesitating, he commenced:

"I shipped on board the 'Black Boy.'"

"What as?" demanded the captain and mate in a breath.

"As—as a sailor, sir."

"They must have been precious short of hands to ship such a lubber as you," said Captain Hughes, contemptuously. "Go on. Where did you ship?"

"At Palermo, in Sicily, sir. We were wrecked in that gale five days ago, and all hands, except myself, were drowned. I managed to save myself by getting into that boat."

"And why did not the others get into the boat?"

"I really don't know, sir. I was very much confused, and don't exactly remember what happened, but I suppose they forgot it."

Captain Hughes stared, but the mate, who had been looking over the side, exclaimed:

"Why, sir, that boat never belonged to the 'Black Boy.' It is one of the Italian fisher boats."

"It strikes me that this fellow is about the biggest liar that ever spoke the English language, if he is not something worse. Now, then, you had better tell me the truth."

"I have, sir, on my word of honor."

"Your word isn't worth a tinker's curse. Who was the captain of the 'Black Boy'?"

"Captain Campbell," answered Bigamini, prompted thereto by a passing recollection of the little coxswain.

"Another lie. Why, seven days ago, when we spoke the 'Black Boy,' there was no such man on board. Now I'll just give you one more chance to tell the truth, you dirty little vagabond; and if you don't, why, look out for squalls."

Bigamini remained silent.

"Speak, you scoundrel," said Captain Hughes, catching hold of one end of a coil of rope.

In spite of the threatening gesture of the captain, Bigamini saw that an attempt to explain would only involve fresh contradictions and exposure.

So he very rapidly and philosophically made up his mind that it would be better to endure a rope's-end for silence than to risk the chance of greater ills, which would very likely follow if he told the truth.

"Speak, you rascal—once!" exclaimed Captain Hughes.

Bigamini shook his head to intimate that he had no intention of doing so.

"Speak—twice!"

Captain Hughes flourished the rope's end over his head, but the little tailor resolutely held his tongue.

"For the third and last time—speak!" shouted the exasperated captain.

Not a word.

Down came the rope with full force, and Bigamini gave vent to a terrible yell.

Again, again and again the cruel cord descended on the shoulders of the howling little spy, but still he obstinately maintained silence as to the past, though loudly imploring for mercy in the present.

"You villian!" said Captain Hughes. "It seems you are obstinate; well, I'll take care and hand you over to the authorities when I reach the end of the voyage. I warrant they will find some method of making you speak. Go forward; and, Mr. Wild, see the rascal works for his rations."

"Aye, aye, sir," said the mate. "Now then, what's-your-name, forward you go."

"Where's that, please, sir?"

"A pretty sailor you are to ship on board the 'Black Boy!'" exclaimed the captain, in a towering rage; "why, there's forward."

So saying, he took hold of Bigamini's collar with

one hand, and his trousers with the other, and threw him with great force towards the foremast.

Poor Bigamini fell on one of the ring-bolts, and cut his ankle severely.

He lay howling on the deck for half an hour; the crew, who had heard his bald, disjointed tale, being of the same opinion as the captain—namely, that he was an impostor, if not something worse.

So they took little or no notice of him till a shift of the wind necessitated an alteration of the sails, when, cursing him for a useless, hulking lubber, one of them scull-dragged him into the fore-castle.

CHAPTER XII.

MOTHER CARY'S CHICKENS.

For three days Bigamini remained in one corner of the fore-castle, subsisting on the scraps of biscuit and beef that were occasionally thrown him, accompanied by a curse.

Be it understood that neither Captain Hughes nor his men were naturally cruel, and if Bigamini had been able to tell "a plain unvarnished tale" when they first found him, he would have fared much better.

But the sailors knew him to be a liar, and his own tale had caused him to be suspected of scuttling the vessel he said he had embarked in.

"That fellow will bring bad luck to the 'Cato,'" said a bushy-whiskered tar to his messmate.

So great was the dislike to Bigamini that it required all Captain Hughes' authority to keep the crew from turning him into his boat again and setting him adrift, a project which found great favor among the tars, and was only prevented by a promise that the obnoxious one should be handed over to the legal authorities on reaching Brazil.

For the three days Bigamini remained in the fore-castle, he was only able to crawl on his hands and knees, the cut on his ankle being very painful, and so offensive from neglect and filth that the sailors strongly objected to his remaining.

The cook—more by the way of a joke than anything, advised Bigamini to wash it with some strong brine from the bottom of one of the beef casks.

He commenced to do so.

"Oh, crikey, oh!" he shouted, as the strong salt found its way into the festering wound; and to the intense delight of the sailors, he hopped about like a bear on hot bricks.

After a little time, however, one of them, who happened to be tender-hearted in comparison with the others, gave the poor wretch a bit of tallow and some rag to dress the wound with.

And in a couple of days Bigamini was so far cured as to be able to hobble about the deck; but in himself he bitterly swore vengeance against his persecutors.

Nothing could possibly make a sailor of the brigand's spy, so Bigamini was handed over to the cook and steward to be a kind of cabin-boy (full grown) and general drudge, to the great delight of the stripling who had formerly performed those duties, but who now went forward to do the work of an ordinary seaman.

The "Cato" did not as a rule carry passengers, but at the time Bigamini was picked up there were five on board, two ladies and three gentlemen.

Of four of the passengers nothing particular need be said, but the fifth, a Mr. Corrie, was noted for his enthusiastic pursuit of all kinds of specimens for his cabinet of natural history.

All was fish that came to his net, and the most insignificant of marine animals was pretty sure to be acceptable to him.

They had been five days at sea without any more important event than the finding of Bigamini, and were now in calm tropical seas, when Mr. Corrie, for the first time in his life, saw a flock of Mother Carey's chickens, and immediately wished the captain to shoot one.

Captain Hughes, without being superstitious himself, knew the crew would object, so he refused, and Mr. Corrie grumbled.

"What's the matter, sir?" asked Bigamini, touching his hat.

"Why, I want one of those birds, and Captain Hughes will not shoot it."

"Never mind, sir; if you can get hold of a gun,

I'll drop the birds. Don't say anything, sir, but bring up a gun next time you come on deck."

Mr. Corrie agreed to do so, and the consequence was, that an hour afterwards Captain Hughes was startled by the report of a gun, and rushing on deck, followed by the mate and some of the crew, at once saw what had happened.

Captain Hughes himself was superior to superstitious fears, but he was angry to think that a thing so strongly objected to had been done.

With one blow of his fist he stretched Bigamini on the deck, and then retired below, muttering anything but good wishes about naturalists and such-like scientific enthusiasts.

"That's very strange," said Mr. Corrie, looking down on the prostrate Bigamini.

Then turning to the mate, he added:

"Will you have the kindness, sir, to let down the boat to pick up the birds?"

"On one condition," replied the mate.

"What condition is that, sir?"

"That you go off in the boat and never more set foot in this ship."

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated the naturalist, "all this fuss about a few trumpery birds."

"Those birds, sir, have a good deal to do with sailors. This is a very serious business, Mr. Corrie, and I can assure you we have not seen the last of it."

The mate then went forward to converse with the crew, and Mr. Corrie thought it best to go below.

As for Bigamini, he gathered himself up and slunk into the caboose, muttering deep vengeance.

"I've been struck, and hit, and served out with brine, and I'm blest if I don't make some of them suffer."

He coiled himself up in a corner, and began to brood over his plans.

"They're all against me," muttered Bigamini, rubbing his eyes, which began to show the discoloring effects of the captain's fist; "but I'm blest if they don't get it hot before long."

All that day he sulked about, pondering how he could achieve his proposed vengeance.

But no opportunity seemed to present itself.

Next morning he heard, soon after breakfast, a slight commotion among the sailors on deck.

Being always inquisitive, Bigamini rushed up to see what was the matter.

He found the sailors congregated about the after part of the deck, watching some motions of the monsters of the deep, who were leaping about in pursuit of a number of flying fish.

"Dolphins," said one of them, condescending to explain to the lubber, as they all styled Bigamini.

"Are they good to eat?" he asked.

"I believe you."

And in proof of that, he pointed to the preparations the men were making to capture one or more of the fish.

But at that moment, the steward shouted for the ex-spy, who was obliged to go forward and prepare the coffee for the men's breakfast.

That done, Bigamini had to work hard to get things ready for the passengers, so he was unable to see the sport of catching the dolphin, though, as he soon heard, he would have to cook it for dinner.

"Now then, down below with you, and sort out those stores," said the steward, quickening the movements of his drudge with his foot.

"All right," growled Bigamini, as he slouched away.

"I wish the stores would poison 'em," he said, as he commenced his task.

It was a dirty, disagreeable job, in a close, confined atmosphere, and did not suit Bigamini very much.

However, he had to do it, so in no very agreeable frame of mind, he set to work.

"What's this?" he exclaimed to himself, when he presently came across a packet weighing two or three pounds.

He stripped off the outer covering, and a fiendish smile played upon his features as he read two words printed on a label upon the inner paper.

"This will do," he grinned; and he soon finished his task.

Reporting this to the steward, Bigamini was on

dered, as he expected, to go and assist the cook in preparing dinner for passengers and crew.

The cook being drunk—the dolphin-catching had excited him early in the morning—Bigamini was obliged to do nearly all the cooking himself.

Strange to say, he did not grumble, as was his usual custom, when burdened with about half as much labor as fell to every other man on board the ship.

He whistled and laughed to such an extent that many of the men relented, and felt sorry they had ever struck and abused the spy.

Dinner time came.

The weather was warm, and the sea so calm that the ship made scarcely any way.

The jolly sailors had little to do.

Laughing and skylarking occupied the greater part of the morning.

But at noon they all sat down to a substantial dinner.

The dolphin had not been cooked, for Bigamini pleaded ignorance of the manner in which the fish should be dressed.

But there was a very substantial "plum duff," of which all partook.

All—captain, crew and passengers.

Except Bigamini, who slyly threw his portion overboard.

Dinner being over, the captain called for one of the crew who was a tolerably proficient fiddler, and proposed a dance.

But ere this could be done the mate came in with a very scared look upon him.

"What's the matter!" demanded Captain Hughes.

"The helmsman has dropped down dead sir, and three other men, including Jones, the fiddler, are as ill as they can be."

On hearing this, the captain turned as pale as his mate, and rushed on deck.

The passengers hardly knew what to make of this.

Our friend, the enthusiastic naturalist, attempted to joke about it, and followed the captain, who, however, was in no humor for joking.

Neither captain nor naturalist returned any more to the cabin, for in a few minutes both were seized with the same illness that had already so rapidly removed no less than four of the crew.

"We are poisoned!" exclaimed the mate.

"Poisoned!"

The terrible word flew through the ship.

"Where is the cook?" was the next question.

The cook was brought forward.

He was in a state of maudlin drunkenness, but otherwise exhibited no symptoms of anything like illness.

"What have you done with us?" demanded the mate, in hollow tones.

"Done?—nothing," stammered the man.

"We are poisoned."

"Then it must have been that vagabond the captain picked up."

"Search for him," said the mate.

A search being instituted, Bigamini was discovered in the fore-castle, apparently in the last agonies of death.

"It couldn't have been that fellow; he wouldn't poison himself. It must be you, for you alone are unhurt by the fatal stuff. I feel it."

"It is a mistake," protested the cook; "why should I poison you?"

But the mate and his men, who were fast succumbing to the effects of the poison, were not capable of reasoning very coherently.

"Overboard with the murderer! He shall not triumph," said the officer.

Half a dozen willing hands seized the unfortunate cook and hurled him over the side—a meal for the sharks, who now sported about the vessel.

The prognostications of the sailors had been fulfilled, though we still take the liberty of doubting whether the two birds had anything to do with it.

Let us close this painful scene as quickly as we can.

Two hours after that deathly dinner all was silent on the ill-fated ship.

Silence, deep as the grave, till the villain,

Bigamini, rose from the corner where he had been pretending to die, and gloated like a fiend over the work he had done, for he it was who had poisoned the whole ship's company with the packet of arsenic he had found among the stores.

He laughed like a fiend as he ransacked the vessel and transferred all the coin he could find to his own pocket.

But in the midst of his exultation a pain shot through him, and he had to cease from his work to sit down among the pale corpses which strewed the deck.

Half an hour afterwards he was in a raging fever and delirious.

And he was the only living being on board that fated vessel, which drifted away on the ocean, with no hand to guide the helm.

Faugh! Let us leave the wretch to his fate.

When Jack reached the Strada Di Toledo, after the execution, he kissed Emily and said:

"We sail for England to-morrow, darling."

"To-morrow?" she said, joyfully.

"Yes, I shall take passage presently in the first steamer of the Messageries Imperiales line."

"Who goes with us?"

"Harvey and Hilda, Mr. Mole, as the youngster's tutor, and Monday."

"What of our American friend?"

"Oh, he goes on to Rome. He has not yet done what he calls his European tour," said Jack.

"And Mr. Campbell?"

"He marries Lily Cockles to-morrow, before we start, and they are going to Switzerland."

"So we separate after all the exciting events we have gone through," said Emily.

"Certainly," replied Jack; "and now we'll have a bottle of wine. I've licked the brigand and I'm as jolly as a sand-boy."

All was over.

The Englishmen had kept their oath, and hunted down Barboni and his formidable band.

[THE END.]

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